



# Communication's Civic Callings:

THE SOCIAL JUSTICE EXCHANGE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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# Putting NCA's Civic Callings into Action: The Social Justice Exchange and Supporting Cultures of Collaboration



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THE 102<sup>ND</sup> NCA ANNUAL CONVENTION, hosted in Philadelphia in November of 2016, was driven by the theme of “Communication’s Civic Callings.” Hoping to empower a generation of scholars who look beyond the traditional ivory tower for their inspirations, collaborators, and community projects, the theme highlighted the intersections of teaching, research, and service, where our Communication theories and practices speak to, learn from, and work alongside practitioners tackling the urgent needs of local, national, and international communities. To put it bluntly, it was time for NCA to chart a new course: to acknowledge the desperate needs of communities not traditionally present at the convention or represented in our scholarship; to reclaim Communication’s civic callings from decades of high-theory; to link Communication scholarship to grassroots, democratic practices; to point our teaching, research, and service in the direction of justice; and to dedicate our institutional resources and personal energies to addressing community needs.

To put these big ideas into action, NCA members responded with a sweeping array of panels, workshops, short courses, pre-conferences, film screenings, and more, thus filling the 2016 convention with a remarkable sense of community and an urgency of purpose. We all knew it was going to be a very different kind of convention when, on the first night, the annual Opening Session included an impromptu “die-in” led by colleagues both shocked and scared by the results of the presidential election the night before: Donald Trump—the arch racist, misogynist, xenophobe, proud know-nothing, endorser of torture, professed builder of “the wall,” documented sexual predator, and reality-show vulgarian—was going to be the next president of the United States. To embody their fear and that of their students and community allies, the participants in the “die-in” sought to illustrate in graphic terms how a Trump victory left them both feeling injured and anticipating trouble to come. Throughout the first day of the convention, this sense of pain was powerful; it seemed that many NCA members were in mourning.

But mourning quickly gave way to anger, and anger to talk of organizing, and from there the floodgates opened: more than 5,000 Communication scholars began discussing how to rebuild a sense of civic decency, how to build a media culture of evidence and fair debate, how to cherish diversity and inclusion to fuel a collective sense of justice, how to use words and songs and poems and images and bodies to communicate hope and fear and love, how to talk about our impending environmental catastrophe, how to tackle global terrorism, how to communicate about complicated health care issues and economic models, how to be better teachers and administrators, and so much more.

The convention closed on Saturday night with a truly remarkable event: Bryant Keith Alexander, Lisa Tillman, Shane Mormon, and their all-star panel of LGBTQ+ scholars and activists gathered 150 attendees at the “One Pulse” event, held to commemorate the victims of the Orlando nightclub shooting, the worst hate-crime massacre

in United States history. The session also helped chart new routes to community belonging and generosity, physically embodied when attendees held hands in a circle and squeezed a pulse of love around the room, thus creating a circle of care, a secular prayer. As the session ended, I was not the only one weeping. Folks walked around, almost as if stunned, saying things like “Remarkable,” “What just happened?” “Wow,” and “We should do that again!” This was communication as embodied solidarity, as civic calling, as a testament to our collective commitment to an enlightened, inclusive, reason-based, and joyously performative version of democratic life.

**THE REAL WORK OF DEMOCRACY IS DONE IN THE TRENCHES:** in homeless shelters and soup kitchens and prison libraries, at PTA meetings and city council hearings, behind the microphones of community radio stations and at the fingertips of bloggers—in the hundreds of grassroots civics gatherings where our ideals rub up against the realities of daily life. Sometimes that work means interfacing with official government agencies, and sometimes it means holding your tongue to fight another day; it also means marching in the streets with great, throbbing waves of allies shouting or singing together, or silently gathering in places of sanctuary and refuge. Regardless of your specific political vision, however, or your preferred forms of civic action, all democratic life hinges on building collaborations. Meeting folks, talking with them, sharing ideas, jointly planning events and programs, working the phones and email and texts, drafting press releases and crafting posters—these are the daily acts of civic engagement that enable democracy to flourish.

As Communication teachers, scholars, and service leaders, we can find ourselves colonized by our professional lives. The daily grind of work can take over. It almost feels as if Facebook has become a show-off gallery for colleagues to mark their workaholic tendencies: “*Just finished another article!*” (posted on a Saturday afternoon); “*Grading essays again, ugh!*” (posted at 3:30 a.m.); “*Anybody have a good reference on...*” (posted on a major national holiday)... life-work balance is hard to build into an education system that expects 50-hour work weeks, superhuman productivity, and monomaniacal focus.

And so, a movement has been growing within the Communication discipline to try to embed our civic callings within our teaching, our research, and our service. Instead of asking ourselves to *do more*, we now do our work *differently*, so that teaching in prisons becomes a form of engaged, collaborative research and community solidarity; so that leading community dialogues about alternatives to gender violence becomes a form of engaged scholarship and service; so that working with local health care providers becomes a teaching platform and research laboratory. Instead of confining ourselves to a campus that is isolated from a community, we network multiple entities, bringing our community partners into our classes and our classes into our communities. We strive for a holistic sense of synergy between research, teaching, and service, with the whole enterprise fueled by an overarching sense of working with, for, and alongside those in need. In this way, Communication’s civic callings becomes the central, driving purpose of what we do.

At the 2016 NCA Annual Convention, a group of us thought we might help to inculcate these values across the organization by creating an open forum where scholars, teachers, and service leaders could meet with representatives of Philadelphia-based community groups that are doing the hard, street-level work of democracy. To indicate the networking, collaboration-building, dialogic nature of the experiment, we called it the *Social Justice Exchange* (hereafter, SJE). Led by the tireless Dr. Bryan Crable of the Waterhouse Family Institute for the Study of Communication and Society at Villanova University, the SJE brought representatives from 18 local advocacy organizations to the convention in the hope that NCA members would learn from these fellow engaged citizens and, in turn, share our own research. We hoped that the SJE would serve as an open-ended opportunity for NCA members to launch working partnerships with these community leaders from across the political spectrum. In this way, the SJE was meant to be a democratic laboratory, an open-ended working space where NCA members could find new partners for community-based and communication-driven projects.

**THE SJE WAS SUCH A LOVELY SUCCESS** that NCA’s National Office and elected leadership decided to document our project. To that end, this book includes 18 mini-reports written by participating community partners describing their work and communication strategies. We also include similar reports authored

by Communication scholars that situate an individual organization’s work within the larger paradigm of Communication scholarship. Ultimately, we hope that readers can use this as a “how to” guide for beginning their own forms of civic engagement.

For example, if a student seeks to teach, study, write about, and work with an environmental group, the reports relevant to that issue area can provide a clear starting point for consideration, suggested readings for enrichment, and key questions to frame future endeavors. We hope this serves as a launch pad for a new generation of engaged scholars who are responding to Communication’s civic callings. Each report ends with a list of suggested sources that directs readers to a selection of books, journal articles, white papers, or websites to begin the next step in answering a civic calling. We also encourage readers to contact the authors herein, all of whom have agreed to serve as mentors.

In closing, by creating this “how to” guide, we hope to enable evermore numbers of NCA colleagues to begin the joyous path of merging their research, teaching, and service in the cause of a healthy, thriving democracy.

**FOR THEIR HARD WORK ON AND SUPPORT FOR THIS PROJECT**, thanks to Michelle Randall, Trevor Parry-Giles, Wendy Fernando, Mark Fernando, and everyone in the NCA National Office; to Bryan Crable and everyone at the Waterhouse Family Institute for the Study of Communication and Society at Villanova University; to Billie Murray for her powerful opening statement; to Larry Frey and his colleagues for their comprehensive resource guide; to all of our community partners, whose energies and commitments we hope to honor in this publication; and, finally, and especially, to Jenna Sauber from the NCA National Office, for her tireless work in organizing this project. ■



## INTRODUCTION

# Social Justice, Collaborative Research, and Communication's Civic Callings



Billie Murray  
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AS MENTIONED IN THE PREFACE, the start of the 102<sup>nd</sup> NCA Annual Convention coincided with the 2016 presidential election, about which many of our members were feeling despair, fear, and utter disbelief. I am writing this introduction in the early months following the inauguration of our new president, and more importantly, after attending inauguration protests and participating in one of the largest protest events in our history, the Women's March on Washington (with solidarity marches held in every U.S. state and on every continent).<sup>1</sup> As these marches and protests indicate, and as embodied in this Social Justice Exchange publication, people are no longer paralyzed by despair or disbelief—they are getting to work.

This publication is designed to provide resources for NCA members as we also “get to work.” Indeed, *Communication's Civic Callings: The Social Justice Exchange and Community Engagement* offers a compilation of reflections from the Communication scholars and community partners who participated in the convention's Social Justice Exchange (hereafter SJE), which was hosted by NCA and the Waterhouse Family Institute for the Study of Communication and Society. These short reflections provide a plethora of academic and community resources for experienced Communication activist scholars or those just getting interested in community-based scholarship and participatory research. To fuel our thinking on these topics, each reflection provides specific information about community groups, the Communication research that informs their practices, and bibliographic resources to help colleagues deepen their engagement with social justice issues.

Both the SJE and this follow-up publication originated with one question: “What do our communities need from Communication Studies?” As you read the accounts of how Communication research, pedagogy, and praxis can assist in addressing the multitude of social issues represented at the SJE, several patterns emerge. Our participants are clear in their calls: “Researchers can (and should!) build sustainable relationships with community partners to share university assets and resources with the community.” Community organizations “need empirical research that verifies the nature and scope of the problems they are trying to solve.” Community groups seek communication practitioners who can help them create and implement “expanded public forums,” “training resources,” and “effective public relations” for their products and services. These groups seek “improved website and social media presence, including multimedia storytelling and engaging presentation templates.” Finally, they need advice and support for navigating the “politics of translation” and complicated processes of “coalition building.” Within these and other responses, our community partners highlighted one idea as especially important: collaboration. They are not seeking outside consultants, one-off advice, or quick fixes; rather, they seek Communication-based experts who are willing and able to make long-term commitments to collaborate on specific projects.

For example, when I spoke with one SJE participant about developing “best practices” for community-based researchers, she put this idea of collaboration and mutual benefit in sharp relief. Researchers, she said, “should be in those communities, particularly communities of color that may have a distrust of researchers or university representatives. They should have sustained, *real* relationships with the people they are researching... People are asked for their knowledge, but are not paid... Universities often don’t have to pay property taxes in those communities.” As this partner’s experiences suggest, community members often perceive researchers as exploiting communities rather than contributing to them. This isn’t a new idea to those of us who are doing participatory or activist research. We have all learned the importance of building meaningful coalitions and to avoid using communities simply to further our own research agendas and careers. However, this community partner was clear about how vital these relationships are for the production of knowledge: “Community partners should be a part of the research design from the start,” she suggested—not just included (or exploited) after the research is planned.<sup>2</sup> By honoring and beginning with this assumption, I hope *Communication’s Civic Callings: The Social Justice Exchange and Community Engagement* provides useful guidance as we forge common ground with community partners, focusing on the shared goals of knowledge production and furthering social justice objectives.

In my own scholarship with and alongside activist communities, I have observed and participated in protests of various sorts and for various causes. The inauguration protests, the Women’s March, and the ever-growing number of protests at airports and in communities across the country regarding immigration issues, for example, are the most diverse I have ever seen. People from all walks of life, of diverse ages, races, religions, genders, and even ideological commitments have come together to say “No, not in my country, not in my world.” During these protests, I have heard a wide range of chants and calls, including:

*Black Lives Matter!*  
*Trans Lives Matter!*  
*My body,*  
*My choice!*  
*No Trump*  
*No KKK*  
*No fascist USA!*  
*Save our climate,*  
*Save our world!*  
*This is what democracy looks like!*

The chants start with an individual and then are taken up by more and more people within their vicinity, cresting into a wave of sound and energy; the chants are sometimes hopeful, but often angry. Inevitably, this cacophony is characterized by the mainstream press as chaos, as lacking focus or organization. But the most common chant I have heard these past few months tells a different story:

*The people*  
*United*  
*Will never be divided!*

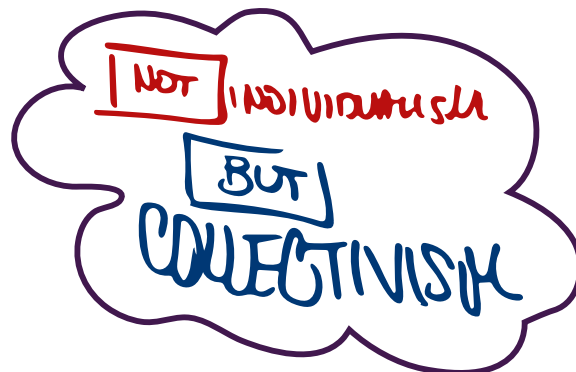
Embodying this chant, my research has shown that critical masses of people are willing and able to come together to participate in their democracy.<sup>3</sup> While the idea of coming together is important, not just for activists, but also for researchers and their “participants,” the notion of coming together is not without complications—complications that Communication scholars are well-equipped to navigate. Indeed, while I marvel at the diversity of voices and the shows of solidarity at these protests, I also see in them a desperate need for communication expertise in a



multitude of forms to help people navigate the complexities and difficulties of public life. There could be no better fit for a Communication scholar interested in civic engagement, social justice, and community! Surely our individual and collective expertise on the communicative components of dialogue, intergroup communication, rhetoric, media, organizational communication, ethics, persuasion, and more, can be used to support and advance these groups and their causes. Surely, as NCA members, our expertise can be deployed in collaboration with these groups as we work for social change while foregrounding the importance of free and ethical communication.

And so, I hope *Communication's Civic Callings: The Social Justice Exchange and Community Engagement* serves as a resource for researchers, teachers, and community members to think through how those of us who are invested politically and theoretically in ethical communication and democratic participation can use our communication expertise to continue difficult conversations across lines of difference. Hopefully, this publication will also trigger other questions, such as: How can we use our research to explore what it means to be an ally in these divisive times? How can we use our positions of institutional privilege to ensure that communication remains free and open to all? How can we, as Communication theorists, teachers, and practitioners, learn from and with our community partners?

History teaches us that social justice initiatives and free expression often thrive under the threat of oppression; a cursory survey of early 2017 news reports indeed reveals a surge of social movement organizing and progressive initiatives. Communication scholars are a part of these movements in a variety of ways, but there is more we can do. Regardless of where you find yourself in the Communication discipline or the academic world, being a neutral observer no longer seems to be an option. We, as a discipline, as a community of scholars and teachers, will decide on which side of history we will place ourselves. That decision will involve conflicts among our ethics, our scholarship, the jobs we love, and our own self-preservation. But so much is possible when a community like ours comes together and uses our communicative power to teach, to analyze, to mobilize, to tell the truth, and to speak out. We, as Communication scholars, are uniquely able to contribute to a multitude of conversations about important issues that will face our nation in the coming years. If we truly want to fulfill our obligations as Communication scholars and practitioners, we need to be ready to answer Communication's civic callings by engaging in collaborative partnerships that advance the cause of free and ethical communication. ■



<sup>1</sup> Hartocollis, A. and Alcindorjan, Y. "Women's March Highlights as Huge Crowds Protest Trump: 'We're Not Going Away,'" *The New York Times*, January 21, 2017, [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/21/us/womens-march.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/21/us/womens-march.html?_r=0); "Pictures from Women's Marches on Every Continent," *The New York Times*, January 23, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/21/world/womens-march-pictures.html>

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Alcoff, L. "The Problem of Speaking for Others," *Cultural Critique* 20 (1991-92): 5-32; Frey, L. et al., "Looking for Justice in all the Wrong Places: On a Communication Approach to Social Justice," *Communication Studies* 47 (1996): 110-127; Wood, J. "Theorizing Practice, Practicing Theory," *Applied Communication in the 21st Century*, ed. Cissna, K. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995), 181-192.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, B. "The Sphere, the Screen, and the Square: 'Locating Occupy in the Public Sphere.'" *Communication Theory* 26.4 (2016): 450-468.

## INTRODUCTION

# Creating the Social Justice Exchange: Inspiration, Collaboration, and Partnership



Bryan Crable  
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Director of the Waterhouse Family Institute for the  
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WHEN VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY LAUNCHED THE WATERHOUSE FAMILY INSTITUTE for the Study of Communication and Society (WFI) in 2010, as Founding Director I hoped that it would highlight the unique and powerful contributions Communication students, professionals, scholars, and activists can make in the struggle for a more just social world. I also hoped the WFI would serve as a resource for the discipline as a whole—by awarding research grants to Communication scholars across the country, by offering support for undergraduate-led projects, and by funding unique conferences and symposia linking Communication and social justice. Five short years later, Stephen Hartnett recognized another way the WFI could serve the NCA membership. While planning the 102<sup>nd</sup> NCA Annual Convention in Philadelphia, Stephen contacted me, mentioning that the WFI was a natural fit with the conference theme of “Communication’s Civic Callings” (see Stephen’s preface for more details on this theme and its significance). We agreed that the WFI could sponsor a key event—one that would connect NCA attendees to the dedicated staff of nonprofit, community, and activist groups in the Philadelphia area. Not only was this a wonderful way to engage our “civic callings,” but it fit perfectly with my desire to have the WFI serve NCA by highlighting Communication and questions of justice. This, then, was the birth of what we called the *Social Justice Exchange*.

We aimed for 40-50 partner organizations, but given the sheer number of social justice groups in the Philadelphia area, I needed to set criteria to craft a more manageable list of possible invitees. Carefully considering the nature of the event, I made a series of decisions regarding the organizations to target—decisions that reflected the values and priorities for the SJE, and that ultimately shaped the nature of the event itself. As I note below, these decisions created unique challenges for the organization and execution of the event itself. But let me first offer a brief discussion of the criteria used to generate our final list of SJE partner organizations.

First, I decided that *all the organizations involved needed to be Philadelphia-based*, rather than Philadelphia chapters of national (or regional) groups. I thought the focus on local organizations was an important way to celebrate and recognize Philadelphia as our host city, rather than privileging national organizations, or organizations headquartered in other cities. Second, I decided to *focus on smaller nonprofit/community/activist groups*. There are many organizations in Philadelphia doing social justice work with budgets to match their citywide prominence. For example, Philabundance is a wonderful organization focused on eradicating hunger in the Philadelphia area, but it is much bigger than the groups I wanted our colleagues to interact with at the SJE. Third—and here is, of course, where things become more difficult—I *wanted to cover a range of social justice issues*. This is not to say, of course, that it would be possible to have comprehensive coverage of every kind of social justice work that is going on in Philadelphia. While recognizing that the organizations represented in the SJE would always reflect the partiality of selection, I was conscious of the desire to avoid having too many groups focusing on one social justice

issue (prison reform, for example, or environmental justice). In this way, I hoped to create an event that would be of interest to scholars across our divisions and interest groups. Fourth, *I wanted each of NCA's caucuses matched with at least one organization whose mission corresponded to its focus.* As NCA's website reminds us, "Caucuses represent the interests of a specific demographic or socially defined segment of the NCA membership." Because each of these caucuses represents the concerns of a minoritized population and seeks to redress its historical exclusion and silencing (within and beyond NCA), I saw each caucus as identifying a key site of social injustice—and, indeed, a site already recognized and prioritized by NCA.

Finally, *I decided to avoid the pretense of "objectivity" or "neutrality" regarding the social justice concerns represented in the SJE*—this choice stirred some disagreement from other NCA members. As NCA began to promote the SJE in its communications, I was asked whether I had simply created a "liberal" event, explicitly excluding "conservative" groups and privileging a "one-sided" narrative on social justice. Although Stephen and I responded to these concerns, I want to address them again here. I recognize that others might feel differently, but I firmly believe that current conventions equating "objectivity" with "presenting both sides of the argument" are wrongheaded and, often, simply *oppressive*. At times, such an equation is nonsensical. For example, I don't think the inclusion of an organization working to eradicate homelessness requires also inviting a group that seeks to maintain (or increase) homelessness. In other words, on many issues of social justice, to insist on "both sides" is to create a false binary in the name of a mythical, chimeric vision of objectivity. More importantly, though, I maintain that insistence on hearing from "both sides" does not produce "equality" or "objectivity," but instead maintains existing conditions of oppression and injustice. As director of an institute focused on communication as central to the creation of social justice, for example, I was not going to "balance" a group providing counseling, programs, and support for at-risk LGBTQ+ youth with an invitation to the Philadelphia equivalent of The Traditional Values Coalition—an organization that has been identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as an anti-LGBTQ+ hate group. To do so would not be to eliminate "bias," but instead to tacitly reaffirm the legitimacy of a perspective that devalues, dehumanizes, and enacts symbolic violence on these members of our community. Our "civic callings," I contend, require Communication scholars, students, activists, and professionals to take a stand—and this may require that we analyze, and even reject, the symbolic (and material) work done by the familiar tropes of "both sides," "objectivity," and "fairness." Thus, I did not generate a "balanced" list of partner organizations for the SJE lineup, nor would I claim that this was ever my aim.

With these criteria to help guide the composition of our partner organizations, I turned to the much stickier business of embodying these ideals in the many details of the SJE. Although, as Director of the WFI, I had taken responsibility for the event, I quickly realized it could not be a solo project. To that end, I reached out to several faculty members at Villanova—Drs. Billie Murray, Terry Nance, Sheryl Bowen, Heidi Rose, and William Cowen—colleagues with activist orientations and/or connections to nonprofit groups in the area. They served as "sounding boards" and invaluable sources of advice and suggestions for community partner organizations. In addition to these Villanova colleagues, I contacted several other NCA members, but I would especially highlight how much I gained, in terms of insight and important contacts, from Dr. Todd Wolfson (Rutgers University), Dr. Barbara Ferman (Temple University), and Dr. Lisa Corrigan (University of Arkansas). Without these colleagues and others I have neglected to mention, the SJE would not have been possible. In addition, the NCA National Office staff played a vital role in translating my requests to the staff of the Marriott, and they also did a wonderful job of taking on several of the vital administrative and promotional details tied to the SJE. To all the friends, colleagues, and allies mentioned (and those not mentioned by name), I, and the SJE as a whole, owe a debt of gratitude.

But even armed with the lists and advice provided by these colleagues, I knew I needed additional help with the legwork associated with this endeavor, so I reached out to another colleague, Dr. Jason DelGaudio from Temple University. Given his own work as an activist-scholar-educator, and his deep roots in the Philadelphia activist community, he was an ideal collaborator for the SJE. Using the set of criteria outlined above, Jason and I worked through our lists of contacts and determined a set of finalists. We spent several months contacting people by phone and email, checking, rechecking, and altering our list of invitees, trying to nail down our final list of partner organizations. Jason did a tremendous job in this regard, and the SJE was successful only because of his tireless work on this project.

However, as we spent weeks and months on these tasks, I realized that the criteria that I put in place regarding the partner organizations produced a set of unique challenges for us. The choice to focus on smaller, Philadelphia-centered organizations meant that these community partners were also often harder to track down—because, as anyone with experience in these contexts knows, the few staff involved (many of whom are volunteers, and work only part-time for the organization) are stretched so thin that they find it difficult to quickly respond (if at all) to emails or phone calls from relative strangers. We also had several organizations initially agree to participate but then back out, some at the last second. In most cases, this was prompted by an unanticipated development—a key member of the organization fell ill, left on maternity leave, got called to other duties, or lost their childcare at the last second—and the small size of the organization meant that no one else could fill in, given their other commitments. In the case of two organizations, they were called to action in response to a crisis at the last minute, which meant that all employees were needed on site (or in the field). Finally, as Stephen’s preface notes, the timing of the conference just following the election found a few groups (especially, but not solely, those focused on issues of immigration) dealing with crises sparked by the election of a president whose campaign speeches and tweets were filled with threats against minoritized populations. Although we entered the week of the conference with roughly 40 partner organizations, we ultimately had 18 organizations represented at the SJE itself—and we did fall short of representing as many social justice areas (and caucuses) as I’d initially hoped. However, despite this small shift in the size of the event, the SJE was, as Billie Murray’s introduction discusses more fully, quite successful in breaking down barriers between the academy and the community—and in stimulating the kinds of conversations, partnerships, and alliances that Stephen and I had hoped to generate.

As those of you who attended the SJE know, the representatives from these partner organizations were placed in dialogue with NCA members who shared common interests. Based on my final list of partner organizations and a brief sketch of their missions, Stephen reached out to the leaders of our divisions, interest groups, and caucuses, and asked them to solicit volunteers who could serve as the organizations’ NCA partners. Using their recommendations, Stephen compiled a list of scholars and asked them to engage in spirited dialogue for the three hours of the SJE, and specifically to talk about how Communication scholars and students can both benefit community/activist/nonprofit organizations and learn from them. As you see in Billie Murray’s introduction, this at times produced difficult conversations—but also insights that are useful for those who heed these “civic callings” in their home communities.

Following the conclusion of the 2016 Conference, we asked both the NCA members and our partner organizations to reflect on these experiences and conversations, and to write about them—the results are collected here. Reflecting the stretched-too-thin staff of these organizations, not all our partner organizations were able to submit reflections on their SJE experience. We have collected 18 organizations’ reflections, and notes on the kinds of projects or concerns that could enable Communication scholars, students, and professionals to make real contributions to their communities—to serve as allies to groups that are on the front lines in our contemporary struggles for social justice. Each of the partner organizations included here provides contact information, a mission summary, and some thoughts on the kinds of alliances between activism and Communication scholarship and pedagogy that might be truly beneficial. I invite you to read through them, in the hopes that reflection on the work these organizations are doing might also inspire you to seek out these kinds of partnerships in your home community—or to contact the organizations included here—and, in this way, help realize the potential of Communication to craft a more just social world. ■

# Community Organizations and NCA Communication Scholar Responses

## BAREFOOT DOCTOR COMMUNITY ACUPUNCTURE



Barefoot Doctor Community Acupuncture  
618 E Girard Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19125  
tel: 215.870.2211 | barefootclinic.com

### WHAT WE DO

Our Mission: The Barefoot Doctor Community Acupuncture Clinic in Fishtown is one of several community-style clinics opening across the country. The aim of this type of practice is to make acupuncture and natural healthcare available to the majority of the population, rather than just to the minority who can afford the out-of-pocket expense of the “spa”-type treatment setting. We strive to make patients feel empowered in their care. We welcome and respect all patients, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. We know that acupuncture doesn’t have to be expensive to work. In our clinic, people can commit to treatment plans that sometimes require frequent visits. Our sliding scale fees and other clinic systems work to ensure equal treatment, and to encourage diversity. The community acupuncture model provides patients with access to affordable treatment without dependence on third-party payers or grants. Our low-cost/high-volume setting also makes it easy for patients to refer friends and family, and builds long-reaching relationships that create stability and keep acupuncture treatments available to all.

### COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES/ISSUES

As is the case with most nonprofits, Barefoot Doctor operates on a narrow profit margin. We rely primarily on word of mouth from patients as a source of marketing. Some necessary upgrades in website and other media are more costly, but are required for our business. While we sometimes utilize volunteers with design or marketing skills, we would love to find a cost-effective way to rebuild a mobile-friendly website and create cohesive marketing materials.

### CURRENT NEEDS

In rethinking our website and online presence, it would be helpful to understand what online searches lead people to acupuncture and our clinic, and ways that our website and social media pages might make us more visible to those seeking acupuncture care. We would also like to research effective strategies for connecting with patient groups who experience health problems that could benefit from acupuncture treatment, and with physicians who treat those patients.

### POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING BENEFITS

We would love training in the effective use of social media and ways that we might apply these tools better for Barefoot Doctor. We would also be interested in learning about making and editing short videos for website and social media use.



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**MY CONVERSATION WITH JENNY CORBIN**, an acupuncturist and owner of the Barefoot Doctor Community Acupuncture Clinic (BDCA), highlighted several obstacles that many community-run organizations often face, and others that are, perhaps, unique to an alternative-health practice. It also highlighted the importance of scholarship in the areas of public relations and health communication. The BDCA has three primary needs: to improve community understanding of acupuncture, to improve community awareness of the clinic, and to improve its online presence. While client retention is good, the BDCA wants to reach out to additional groups, particularly the elderly population, which may benefit from the chronic pain relief provided by acupuncture. Unfortunately, the clinic does not get much foot traffic or have good signage and, while it is close to a bus stop, it is not accessible by the disabled or many of the elderly. Perceived safety is an issue, as the surrounding neighborhood was previously not considered to be safe and the stigma associated with the area continues to keep potential clients away. To address awareness, Corbin would like to develop educational brochures for community members, and form partnerships with local doctors and nursing homes for patient referrals so she can administer treatments on site. Gaining a better understanding of the community's health needs is the first step toward creating a communication strategy for reaching new clients and generating awareness of acupuncture (via print materials, a new website, and a social media presence) and creating partnerships with local doctors, nursing homes, and retirement communities.

Communication scholarship, especially scholarship in public relations and health communication, is important to the success of organizations such as BDCA. As alternative or complementary medicine becomes more mainstream, it is vital that our scholarship begins to investigate the unique challenges of this more holistic approach to healthcare. Health communication scholars can certainly help build bridges among patients, primary care physicians, and holistic medicine providers. Including the alternative therapist on the medical team may help improve patient outcomes and reduce the tension, perceived or real, that patients may feel when they want to seek complementary therapy. Unfortunately, as BDCA has discovered, becoming an involved part of the patient's medical team can be challenging, if not impossible. Public relations efforts are also crucial to the BDCA's lofty goals of creating awareness and understanding. Often, awareness is confused with understanding, so the BDCA must rely on basic public relations tasks: in a changing community, find out who lives there and determine their health needs, find the opinion leaders in the community, and commit to an active media presence consisting of both traditional and new media. Content production and social media management is problematic for BDCA because it is operated by one person; however, relying on interns from local universities could prove helpful. Certainly, goals such as BDCA's cannot be achieved overnight, but an accurate audience analysis and communication audit will be critical to BDCA's success.

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## BROKEN ON ALL SIDES/THE THREAD PODCAST



Broken on All Sides/The Thread (Matt Pillischer)  
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### WHAT WE DO

Our Mission: Our mission is to create a national organization that weaves together the most politically advanced organizers in the movement against mass incarceration, and to explore how to unite our strategies, tactics, and histories. The project began to explore, educate, and advocate for change around the overcrowding of the Philadelphia county jail system. The project has come to focus more broadly on mass incarceration across the nation, and the intersection of race and poverty within criminal justice. Our feature-length documentary is available for activists and educators to use to raise consciousness and organize for change.

### COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES/ISSUES

Our main communication-related challenge is doing everything on a shoestring budget, on a mostly volunteer basis. A significant challenge is incorporating fundraising into an overarching communication strategy. Other challenges include creating and managing an organized contact list, and fully utilizing social media.

### CURRENT NEEDS

Something that would be beneficial for us is hearing ideas for incorporating fundraising into our communications strategy beyond calls for donations, speaking engagements, or DVD ads. It would also be helpful to learn about different client management systems that are low-maintenance, free/cheap, and organized so that we can focus on spreading awareness about our mission/relevant information about our work. Finally, it would be helpful to have ongoing social media/email support, with ideas for how to turn our daily and past work into eye-catching media messaging.

### POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING BENEFITS

We would love training in CRMs (Customer Relationship Management techniques and software). Additionally, training in social media for advocacy would be beneficial, as well as dos and don'ts for email blasts. We have various social media accounts and use MailChimp for email distribution; however, it would be helpful to have training on reaching a wider audience, including a focus on email template design for more attractive and effective messaging.



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THE COMMUNITY GROUP I ENGAGED WITH AT THE SOCIAL JUSTICE EXCHANGE was a one-man operation. Matthew Pillischer, a Philadelphia lawyer, activist, and artist, has two important projects that deal with the issue of mass incarceration: a documentary film, *Broken on All Sides*, and a podcast, *The Thread*.

Through his documentary, Pillischer initially wanted to educate audiences about overcrowding in the Philadelphia County jail system. But as he worked on the film, he expanded it to focus on nationwide mass incarceration and its collateral consequences. He interviewed human rights activists, academics, formerly incarcerated citizens, elected officials, judges, former correctional officers, and attorneys, and included original works by an incarcerated artist and musical compositions by a variety of artists, including himself. Since completing the film in 2012, Pillischer has been promoting it at screenings across the country.

On his podcast, *The Thread*, Pillischer interviews anti-poverty and prison activists (including a prison organizer in solitary confinement who spoke to him on a smuggled cell phone) to highlight strategies for raising awareness about mass incarceration.

While activists appreciate the analytical and policy work of academics, academics appreciate the on-the-ground work of activists. Thus, Communication scholars could help advance Pillischer's work in several ways. They could invite him to screen the film for their institutions or organizations, subscribe to his podcast, and use his materials in their teaching. Moreover, Communication scholars could partner with Pillischer to organize, host, and promote public forums, thus merging our scholarship with his media productions to form a potent team for public education about mass incarceration.

In turn, Pillischer could help Communication scholars translate their academic discourses into understandable language for wider audiences. He believes that the unreflective language choices we sometimes make may render our work inaccessible to activists and community residents. In this way, activists can make academics' research more accessible to students so they become more likely to contribute to social change efforts.

It is important to note that future Communication scholarship would benefit from one of the core principles embodied in *Broken on All Sides* and *The Thread*: highlighting the voices of the incarcerated. Indeed, as other entries in this book indicate, we would do well to ensure that our teaching, research, and service is not only *about* issues of civic engagement and, in this case, mass incarceration, but conducted *in partnership with* those who are most directly impacted by crime, violence, and mass imprisonment.

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## FAIRMOUNT FAIRMOUNT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



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### WHAT WE DO

Our Mission: The Fairmount CDC was formed in 1999 by a group of civic-minded Fairmount neighbors who sought to take advantage of neighborhood improvement opportunities by creating a non-profit community development corporation. Our service area is bounded by two commercial corridors (Girard & Fairmount Avenues), Fairmount Park, and the Eastern State Penitentiary (Corinthian Avenue). Our mission is to foster the improvement of the residential, commercial, and social fabric of the Fairmount neighborhood, while preserving its character and diversity.

### COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES/ISSUES

To say a community development corporation's work is varied is an understatement. As a result, our stakeholders are diverse, and their preferred communication channels are just as diverse. The biggest challenge we face is this: given scarce resources, how do we evaluate the reach and impact of our communication channels and, in turn, improve that mix? As an example, any given program may impact populations of varied income levels, varied housing statuses, varied educational attainment; it takes a mix of outreach to sufficiently reach each audience. But provided the scarcity of financial support for outreach, we must ensure each channel is reaching the right audience. Even if we did have greater financial capacity, what mechanisms could be used to measure the effectiveness of channels like flyers and posters? How do you effectively compare that effectiveness to electronic channels? How do you use that information to improve your channel mix?

### CURRENT NEEDS

I believe information and research that examines the effectiveness of methodologies for different demographics could help us fine-tune our communication strategies. We are aware of the trends and cost/benefits of social media channels, but do they effectively reach a disenfranchised population? On the other hand, are C-level executives who influence corporate giving reachable on social media? Insights on effective segmented channels could have a significant impact on our work.

## POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING BENEFITS

I believe training around communication planning could go a long way for Fairmount CDC. In general, we possess the ability to compose press releases and interface with reporters and editors. However, I believe the bigger challenge is thinking strategically about where to dedicate resources to reach the most appropriate audience.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: FAIRMOUNT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



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**AFTER SPEAKING WITH THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** of the Fairmount Community Development Corporation (FCDC), Kevin Moran, it became clear that scholarship on rhetorical materialism spoke to the civic needs of the FCDC. As an organization that relies on community participation to run effectively, the FCDC must use different communication technologies to connect with its diverse stakeholders. As Kevin conveyed during our conversation, some members of the Fairmount community respond well to communication that is disseminated via the internet (e.g., email, website traffic, posting in forums, etc.), whereas others react better to more public forms of communication (e.g., hosting community forums and posting flyers in various neighborhoods). In addition to using multiple channels to build community support and engagement, the FCDC conceptualizes its built environment as a material form of communication. Thus, as an organization that believes all members of the Fairmount community deserve to inhabit a beautiful space, the FCDC articulates space and place in ways that are diverse and resist the culturally homogenizing effects of gentrification. The FCDC has accomplished this by supporting community revitalization efforts that materially and symbolically reflect the diversity of its populace. One example is through FCDC's collaboration with a range of local artists who create community architecture, such as bike racks, that are unique to each neighborhood in the Fairmont District. In this way, the FCDC envisions the Fairmount neighborhood as a living laboratory of communication in action; an embodied instance of constant civic callings.

Recent scholarship on the political economy of rhetoric can aid organizations such as the FCDC. Neoliberalism, a governing rationality that privileges the spontaneous coordination of the market as a solution to all social, political, and economic problems, constrains the material and symbolic practices of the FCDC. Neoliberalism means the FCDC must constantly seek private funding to maintain its financial solvency, and the organization is disciplined by the laws of the market, which are organized around individual self-interest and competition. Consequently, the political/economic challenges FCDC faces show that Communication theory must be rethought in the context of neoliberalism. If neoliberalism circumscribes how organizations such as the FCDC can practice and communicate about topics such as community revitalization, then the FCDC can benefit from studying and analyzing "pre-originary" rhetoric, such as affect, which seeks to mobilize bodies prior to language and conscious intention. The FCDC may also benefit from recent scholarship on "the commons," which brings attention to the social and ecological relationships that precede market laws.

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## GATEWAY TO RE-ENTRY



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### WHAT WE DO

Our Mission: Gateway to Re-Entry is rewriting the National Narrative on Re-Entry through the delivery of myriad services to which re-entry is connected—education, poverty, hunger, employment/career opportunities, physical and mental health, and job skills training—and which impact youths, veterans, returning citizens, their families, and the communities in which they live and work. Strategic alliances by and between Gateway to Re-Entry and key stakeholders position Gateway to Re-Entry to promote leadership development and create a national, holistic model for re-entry based on the Ten Steps to Re-Entry.

### COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES/ISSUES

Gateway to Re-Entry utilizes myriad marketing strategies. These communication strategies are meant to expand our visual identity, attract strategic partners, and provide services to our clients through our website and the creation of marketing tools via social media, press releases, and brochures. However, obtaining national speaking engagements on a consistent basis for our CEO, Mr. Tracey L. Fisher, remains a challenge.

### CURRENT NEEDS

We would benefit greatly from access to national and global public policy research—statistical and non-statistical—focusing on education, poverty, mass incarceration, restorative justice, community development, and increasing the number of and creating greater/equal access to high-quality physical and mental health resources and support services, housing, and parenting. All of these concerns are connected to re-entry and our mission.

### POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING BENEFITS

Given our mission and current efforts, the following areas of communication training would be of greatest benefit to Gateway to Re-Entry: strategic communication, media relations, damage control/crisis communication, and expansive branding.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: GATEWAY TO RE-ENTRY



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**GATEWAY TO RE-ENTRY IS A PROGRAM THAT IS RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES** impacted by the prison industrial complex. According to Gateway Founder Tracey L. Fisher and Chief of Staff Dr. Carole Simmons, Gateway serves “incarcerated souls” who are vulnerable to returning to prison and youth who are targeted for the cradle-to-prison pipeline. When Mr. Fisher engages audiences about his work, he begins by sharing his own story as “the Face of Re-Entry,” having emerged from 22 years of incarceration with a grounded knowledge of the structural, community, and personal challenges to a successful re-entry into a productive and meaningful life.

Mr. Fisher did not just stumble upon this knowledge. The ideas at the foundation of the Gateway program were developed from the experiences of the incarcerated souls he wanted to reach. As Mr. Fisher witnessed the high rates of recidivism among incarcerated young people while imprisoned himself, he set out to develop an approach that allowed him to begin “changing the narrative of reentry.” He created a questionnaire that engaged the problems of re-entry at the root of recidivism. After collecting hundreds of questionnaires over a period of about ten years, he used an inductive analysis of the results to create “The Ten Steps to Re-Entry” and “The Face of Re-Entry.” These methodologies are presented in his book, *Mental Mentoring*.

Communication scholars can learn from Mr. Fisher’s process of knowledge production and his methodologies for working alongside people living through re-entry. His work also inspires scholarship that challenges the prison industrial complex. Here are several areas of Communication scholarship that could benefit from, and relate to, various civic components of this work.

- Community-led change communicative processes: Mr. Fisher used strategic dialogues to create change grounded in the experiences of those most impacted by the change.
- Advocacy through public speaking: Mr. Fisher tells his personal story as a way to engage other agents of change
- Future Communication scholarship intersecting with, learning from, and/or advancing the cause of Gateway to Re-Entry might focus on the following areas:
- Ally/bridging communication: What critical self-reflexive work do Communication scholars need to prepare to work with incarcerated souls? What are networking communication approaches to work around/with/through gatekeepers at prisons who would try to keep change agents out?
- Storytelling for anti-racist, intersectional re-entry activism: The state, community, and personal contexts that situate re-entry must be understood in terms of the ways power is operating at the intersections of race, gender, and class. How might the stories grounded in intersectional re-entry experiences (in the United States and globally) inform knowledge about state-power and anti-racist change strategies?

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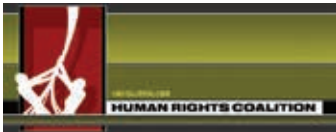
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## HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION



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### WHAT WE DO

The Human Rights Coalition (HRC) is a grassroots, non-profit group of predominantly prisoners' families, prisoners, ex-offenders, and supporters. It was formed to aid and support prisoners' families in coping with the stress and hardships created by having a loved one incarcerated, as well as to challenge the punitive, retributive nature of the penal system; and, to work to transform that to a model of rehabilitation and successful reintegration to society.

Our Vision: The prison system is based on a foundation of exploration, punishment and corruption. Most of the people in prison are poor, brown, urban, and functionally illiterate, were unemployed or under-employed before they were locked down, and are imprisoned for non-violent crimes. The system reflects all the other social inequalities in our system, and it does not work in its current incarnation. HRC's ultimate goal is to dismantle and abolish the prison system and replace it based on accountability, safety, fairness, and resilience, while focusing on healing instead of punishing.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION



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**WORK AT THE HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION OF PHILADELPHIA AND PITTSBURGH** reflects the importance of Communication scholarship in action. The Coalition, a grassroots organization composed of current and former prisoners, their families, and supporters, works to give voice to persons who feel "powerless" in the face of institutionalization. At the heart of the organization is a commitment to challenging and rethinking the current penal system with the hopes of installing a model of rehabilitation in corrective institutions. In place

of punishment and corruption, the group works toward “empowerment and advocacy.”<sup>1</sup> The work of this local group speaks to justice challenges facing the nation as a whole. In my own city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the state of the Allegheny County Jail reflects the challenges and questions facing prisons and jails around the country. During the past 20 years, national crime rates have decreased, but the population in the Pittsburgh jail has increased by 70 percent, with the daily population estimated at 2,200 inmates. At the jail, 81 percent of the inmates are not serving sentences (compared to the national average of 63 percent). Rather, most are awaiting a pretrial for nonviolent crimes including drug or public order offenses. Of the jail’s 2,200 daily inmates, 75 percent suffer from some form of mental illness, substance abuse, or both. In Pittsburgh, as in other cities around the country, criminal justice consumes 42 cents of every tax dollar, the jail is overcrowded, resources for rehabilitation are under-funded, and many persons jailed for a short stay of one to two days lose custody of their children or their jobs.<sup>2</sup> These issues are but a few of the many criticisms levied against the current prison system. Within these challenges are questions concerning racism and social/economic inequality.

Communication scholarship yields insight into current social practices and policy. At the heart of Communication scholarship rests research aimed toward applied communication (the communicative *how*), philosophy of communication (the communicative *why*), and the ethics of communication (the discovery of communication practices and the narratives that inform those practices).<sup>3</sup> In the case of U.S. prison systems, each of these areas is helpful and necessary. Within our scholarship is a commitment to create what Michael Hyde termed rhetorical dwellings within which deliberation among multiple voices can occur.<sup>4</sup> In this specific area of social justice, rhetorical dwellings of deliberation can address several themes. Of first importance is the question of privatization of prisons and the effects this privatization has on prisoners. Second, we must deliberate on the use of funds for prisoner rehabilitation. Third, exploring inmates’ experience of being jailed, the effects of solitary confinement, and changes in personal identity, including one’s understanding of self as citizen upon release, highlights the rhetorical and philosophical challenges our scholarship can address. Finally, we must find ways to walk this research into practice.

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## LA PUERTA ABIERTA



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### WHAT WE DO

Our Mission: La Puerta Abierta's mission is to improve access to high-quality, culturally informed mental health support for vulnerable Latin@ youth and families who face multiple barriers to accessing services in mainstream institutions through training, collaboration, and direct service provision. LPA provides rigorous clinical training and supervision for bilingual Masters-level clinicians and volunteers in the Philadelphia area, as well as case consultation for providers working in partner organizations across Pennsylvania and in Latin America. Through partnerships with schools, churches, and other service organizations, LPA provides community-embedded programming and works to shift attitudes, practice protocols, and policies to ensure that our Latin@ immigrant youth and families feel safe and valued within their communities. Finally, LPA provides pro bono individual, family, and group counseling in both English and Spanish that is holistic, trauma-informed, and culturally informed. LPA's robust programming for newcomer youth from Central America provides emotional support, peer mentorship, and leadership training, incorporating visual arts and other creative modalities that facilitate emotional grounding and community-building.

### COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES/ISSUES

La Puerta Abierta's client community is primarily made up of Spanish speakers, many of whom have been denied access to educational opportunities and health/mental health services due to poverty, migration, and other life circumstances. As such, language access, literacy, and framing are important considerations in putting together impactful websites, brochures, and newsletters. This influences how we talk about mental health services; we use language such as "opportunities for healing," "storytelling," and "strengthening relationships," rather than relying on diagnostic or medical terminology. At the same time, LPA's funder base is primarily English-speaking, and foundations are increasingly interested in data and evidenced-based initiatives, research that is largely non-existent for the newly emerging and marginalized community we serve. We seek to bridge this gap and identify opportunities to more meaningfully engage both audiences.

### CURRENT NEEDS

As a grassroots organization, the majority of labor goes into the practice of our mission rather than outreach through social media and online platforms. We would like to maximize our efficacy in communicating our vision and mission to potential donors, partnership organizations, and community members alike. Additionally, word of mouth has been a critical element in connecting with the community members we serve. We are interested in expanding on this strength by building a social media presence that fosters a sense of community among past, present, and potential program participants.

## POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING BENEFITS

We are currently working to improve our website, increase our social media presence, and develop consistency in message and design across these and other materials. However, we lack the funding required to hire a dedicated professional with expertise in this arena. We would benefit from training on: incorporating interactive elements into our website and social media; effective social media outreach strategies; audio and visual storytelling; and creating visually compelling and impactful templates for presentations.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: LA PUERTA ABIERTA



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AS AN ORGANIZATION THAT OFFERS mental health resources and other forms of community support for the diverse Latina/o/x immigrant community in Philadelphia, as well as international outreach in Latin America, La Puerta Abierta encounters both communication challenges and opportunities for creating more livable communities amidst a U.S. milieu that is shaped by xenophobic, racist, and English-only discourses and policies. The strategic use of communication guides the organization's advocacy efforts, as staff members and volunteers train and supervise the development of bilingual clinical providers, offer service-learning opportunities for students, and host educational forums for different audiences.

At the heart of La Puerta Abierta's work is translation—both translating different texts and experiences to resonate with immigrant clients, and translating the importance of the group's work for non-immigrant audiences. Culturally resonant messaging and framing is paramount, as the organization prepares materials for both underserved and better-served groups that often are not persuaded in the same ways, given disparate experiences with place, power, privilege, and precarity. The communication challenges described by this organization elucidate how framing and storytelling enable and constrain caring about different individuals and their communities.

For example, research by Lisa Flores and other Latina/o/x Communication scholars emphasizes the importance of translation to cultivate spaces for liminal identities, as immigrant youth and their families move and live between two or more places and cultures. La Puerta Abierta's focus on working "across the Americas" speaks to Crista Olson's and René Augustín De los Santos' call for scholars to critique the hemispheric complexities of discourse and to unsettle Communication's disciplinary assumptions by engaging different voices, embodied epistemologies, and social and physical locations. La Puerta Abierta's mental health work also speaks to ongoing research in the health communication field. Rhetorical, interpersonal, intercultural, and organizational perspectives are useful for considering the intersectional efforts of this group, as therapists and clients negotiate the uncertainties, hardships, and hopes associated with living undocumented, as Dreamers supported by DACA, and in mixed-status families.

Members of La Puerta Abierta think strategically about their communication realities, offering Communication scholars, educators, and students possibilities for considering how they might work with this organization and other groups that are mobilizing for social justice. La Puerta Abierta's efforts evince why studying multiple languages, the politics of translation and codeswitching, coalition building, transnational and border rhetorics, and Latina/o/x vernacular and organizational discourses matter for Communication studies. While work on border rhetorics has generated much intellectual energy in our discipline, engaging La Puerta Abierta's messaging and campaigns, including with Central American youth, urges our discipline to further study the complexities



of border rhetorics, bordered bodies, and bordering language that dehumanizes and motivates resistance committed to constructing alternative ways of being and knowing. Also, this organization reminds us that our largely monolingual discipline requires transformation by abandoning English-only requirements for journals and by encouraging non-English conference submissions and sessions as the norm, rather than the marginalized exception. It's worth acknowledging the continued commitment to multilingual advocacy by members of La Raza Caucus and the Latina/o Communication Studies Division, which José Ángel Maldonado, among others, emphasized during last year's business meeting. In the 2017 convention submission call, La Raza accepted conference submissions in both English *and* Spanish. The Asian/Pacific American Communication Studies Division and the Asian/Pacific American Caucus have had similar conversations in the past, which, according to Vincent Pham, raised important questions about whether there are sufficient reviewers with the necessary linguistic expertise for multilingual submissions. These conversations are encouraging and should be engaged across interest groups, not just in those units and divisions that are typically associated with multilingual and multicultural contexts, concerns, and critique.

Together, Communication scholars, educators, and students, as well as groups such as La Puerta Abierta, can work collaboratively toward social change and justice by continuing to study and participate in various discourses that seek to build more just, sustainable communities. More specifically, the organization's need for an improved website and social media presence, including multimedia storytelling and enhanced presentation templates, highlights an area where members of our discipline can advance the goals of this group and others like it. While we often encounter competing demands for our time and energy, especially with tenure and other promotional requirements, La Puerta Abierta's commitment to educational forums and service learning reminds us of the importance of incorporating experiential learning into our teaching, employing diverse research methods—including critical ethnography that engages, learns from, and advocates for local communities—and finding ways for service, teaching, and research activities to coalesce rather than to compete. Ultimately, La Puerta Abierta's work across divides, by including professors and others with diverse areas of expertise and by emphasizing service learning and internships, reveals that maintaining an open door to civic engagement and direct community work is key for advancing social change and justice.

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## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: LA PUERTA ABIERTA



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LA PUERTA ABIERTA (RENDERED IN ENGLISH, LOOSELY, AS “THE OPEN DOOR”) serves the needs of the “most vulnerable youth and families in the Latino immigrant and refugee community.” In light of recent Trump administration executive orders, the organization’s work is crucially important. When I met with them at the Social Justice Exchange, La Puerta Abierta representatives were attracted to the practical prospects of Communication scholarship. Because many aspects of Communication (e.g., interpersonal, organizational, and public) are central to their day-to-day activities and organizational goals, we were readily able to envision how Communication scholars might play a supporting role.

First, grassroots civic organizations need empirical research that verifies the nature and scope of the problems they are trying to solve. When grassroots groups network with potential support organizations, such as funding sources and media outlets, their claims have much more credibility when supported by empirical data. Advocacy research that empirically details the chosen issue area gives requests for support authenticity and a better chance at receiving a response. Communication scholars, as information gatherers, are uniquely suited to assist with this task.

Second, grassroots organizations with a mission to meet the material needs of disenfranchised communities need expanded public forums for storytelling. La Puerta Abierta, for example, has few public forums at its disposal, and as a result, the organization’s unique plights and needs remain muted at society’s margins. Participatory research that uses resonant and relatable narratives can provide a credible forum for storytelling that can be accessed by target audiences. Once Communication scholars have assisted in gathering information, we can also work as organizers, hosts, and promoters of public forums.

A common need among grassroots civic organizations is expanded funding, but these nonprofits often lack training resources for identifying, applying to, and employing grant-based and other funds. Thus, a third vital role Communication scholars can play is assisting with grant applications. While we may not be professional grant-writers or fundraisers, our skills as Communication practitioners can certainly be of use.

Finally, La Puerta Abierta representatives spoke of needing help with media production of all kinds, including building websites, developing brochures and fliers, creating persuasive videos, and even offering public speaking training for its members.

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## LEEWAY FOUNDATION



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### WHAT WE DO

Our Mission: The Leeway Foundation supports women and trans\* artists at the intersection of art, culture, and social change in the Greater Philadelphia area. Through our grantmaking and other programs, we promote artistic expression that amplifies the voices of those on the margins, fosters sustainable and healthy communities, and works in the service of movements for economic and social justice.

*\*We use the term "trans" in its most inclusive sense, as an umbrella term encompassing transsexual, transgender, genderqueer, Two-Spirit people, and more generally, anyone whose gender identity or gender expression is nonconforming and/or different from their gender assigned at birth.*

### COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES/ISSUES

Leeway's biggest communication challenge is creating original content that positions us as a thought leader in the social justice grantmaking space. Sharing our story and the work we do is essential to bringing visibility to the organization. How can we deepen our work and our reach, so that we are invited to engage in spaces where, historically, art and the individual artist have not been welcomed or centered (public policy, education, employment, technology, etc.)? As a regional funder of artists and cultural producers, articulating our impact in ways that are both measurable and meaningful is a challenge, in that the influence is oftentimes intangible. It requires time, research, and access to platforms to communicate the value of creative expression and cultural production in the movement to shift power and end systemic oppression. In 2018, Leeway will celebrate 25 years of funding women in the arts. We seek to celebrate our organizational achievements while simultaneously sharing our continued focus on the work of grantees.

### CURRENT NEEDS

We would benefit most from models and examples of how other small funders have tracked, reported, and scaled their impact. What phases were involved/steps taken? And how was this information documented and shared?

### POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING BENEFITS

Leeway could certainly benefit from media relations training, as well as consulting or guidance within areas of digital communication and social media engagement.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: LEEWAY FOUNDATION



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**THE LEEWAY FOUNDATION SUPPORTS WOMEN AND TRANS\* ARTISTS** whose work focuses on social justice and community building by offering grant programs and other resources. Leeway views art as a critical means of expression and transformation for marginalized communities and thus seeks to enhance artistic production that challenges relations of power and privilege and norms of race, class, gender, sexuality, identity, age, and ability. As Leeway attempts to expand both the scope and the impact of its work, the foundation faces a number of communication challenges, including: 1) encouraging interest from publications outside the art world; 2) articulating the nexus of art, social justice, and change to appeal to wide audiences, placing Leeway artists' work within discourses of artistic production, activism, and sustainable communities; and 3) successfully motivating underrepresented communities to apply for funding and resources. Communication scholarship that addresses the rhetoric of social movements, issues of publics and counter-publics, circulation and media uptake, audience analysis, framing, and relationships of organizations and power is well-suited to Leeway's particular civic needs.

The Leeway Foundation also offers many compelling insights to Communication researchers who are interested in cultural production as a means of activist and political engagement. For example, Leeway is a model for successful coalition-building and intersectional social justice work; the foundation transitioned from being a woman-focused organization based in the vision of a single donor family to a more expansive project that includes trans\* artists and that specifically addresses dynamics of racism. To make this transformation, the foundation intentionally engaged people of color, reorganized its leadership structure, and made changes to both policies and physical structures to better accommodate trans\* people and people with disabilities. In other words, Leeway demonstrates intersectional and coalitional activist praxis. Leeway also poses significant questions to scholars engaged in studies of art as social change; for example, how do artists' personal journey of growth and self-awareness impact their political art? How does the tone of cultural production shift in response to various political realities (for example, the transition from the Obama administration to the Trump administration)? And, to what extent does a piece of art's potentially "radical" message and intervention depend upon historic and cultural contexts and/or its producer's social location?

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## MAZZONI CENTER



Mazzoni Center  
1348 Bainbridge Street, Philadelphia, PA 19147  
tel: 215.563.0652 | mazzonicenter.org

### WHAT WE DO

Our mission: To provide quality comprehensive health and wellness services in an LGBTQ-focused environment, while preserving the dignity and improving the quality of life of the individuals we serve.

The Mazzoni Center is the only healthcare provider in the Philadelphia region specifically targeting the unique healthcare needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities. It was founded in 1979 as an all-volunteer clinic to serve the needs of sexual minorities in Philadelphia. When the first cases of HIV/AIDS began to appear in the early 1980s, the organization quickly responded, becoming the oldest AIDS service organization in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the fourth-oldest in the nation. As it grew and evolved to meet the needs of its constituents, the Mazzoni Center combined HIV/AIDS-related services with a broad continuum of healthcare and supportive services, which include: outreach, prevention, education, direct medical and care services, psychosocial services, legal services, and support groups. With more than 35,000 individuals benefiting annually from our services, we have proven ourselves to be a leader among community-based organizations in the greater Philadelphia area, and have developed a reputation for excellence and innovation in service delivery to our constituents.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: THE MAZZONI CENTER



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**THE MAZZONI CENTER IS A NONPROFIT PROVIDER** of health, youth and legal services, including counseling and recovery support for those experiencing health-related issues (including HIV prevention and care). The Mazzoni Center staff and volunteers understand how one's social locations related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and health form a web with other social and political identities, including race, class, and nationality.

Thus, Communication scholarship speaks to the civic needs of the Mazzoni Center both in an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach. In the future, Communication scholars and their students could establish research, writing, and advocacy partnerships with the Mazzoni Center. A scholar of critical cultural studies, for example, could partner with one or more staff members to "read" Mazzoni through the lens(es) of critical race theory, feminist theory, queer theory, and/or disability studies. Such lenses could bring to light areas of strength and deficiency in Mazzoni's current practices. A professor of marketing, public relations, and/or social media could work with students and in partnership with Mazzoni to develop a campaign designed to reflect and foster the mission and values of the Center, which currently has no in-house designer. A teacher of Communication and the law could contribute research assistance to Mazzoni's pro-bono legal services. Scholars of health communication could

collaborate with Mazzoni staff and volunteers to collect data on the demographics of the local trans community. Local scholars also could set up one or more internships at the Center, perhaps to support digital media. They could also partner with Mazzoni staff to develop seminars on topics such as Mission-Congruent Messaging and Transgender Identities and Inequalities. In turn, staff at Mazzoni could be invited to speak about issues such as bullying and bystander awareness in classrooms. The ideal partnership between an academic institution and Mazzoni, according to Senior Communications Manager Elisabeth Flynn, would involve shared values, consistent communication, a long-term relationship, mutual capacity- and skill-building, and practical outcomes that meet concrete needs of both constituencies.

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## MEDIA MOBILIZING PROJECT



Media Mobilizing Project  
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### WHAT WE DO

Our Mission: The Media Mobilizing Project (MMP) builds leaders—leaders who use their stories to make our organizing stronger; and who build the movement for human rights and to end poverty. Since its founding in 2005, MMP has used strategic media, arts, and communications to intervene in critical human rights struggles including public education, healthcare, media reform, public services, and more. MMP does this through working with low-wage workers, youth, immigrants, and other communities on media collaborations, narrative development, training and education in audio/video production, digital literacy, and human rights.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: THE MEDIA MOBILIZING PROJECT



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AFTER MY MEETING WITH BRYAN MERCER, the Executive Director of the Media Mobilizing Project (MMP), I began to think deeply about social justice and the subaltern. As Gayatri Spivak (2005) argues, the subaltern lack social mobility and empowerment, as they have no recognized voice in political deliberations (pp. 475-476). In contrast to such disempowerment, the MMP of Philadelphia has trained thousands of Philadelphia citizens, empowering them with digital literacy, including both media production and community advocacy skills. MMP gives voice to the citizens of Philadelphia, allowing them to share their untold stories.

MMP believes that anyone should have access to digital communications technology, regardless of socio-economic status, race, age, or gender, and so MMP aims to empower those who need representation: the impoverished, youth, low-wage workers, and immigrants. Because successful social networking requires participation on multiple social media platforms, MMP enables its community partners to use digital media to challenge dominant, mainstream narratives.

Indeed, community representation and social action find spaces in digital media platforms, where voices and stories are shared locally and even internationally (Sobre-Denton, 2015, p. 1716). Conversing with MMP has reminded me of the socio-political inequality that exists in our nation, where older forms of oppression—such as colonialism, sexism, racism, xenophobia, ableism, and socio-economic inequalities—have been reproduced in the digital sphere.

Bryan emphasized that people empowered with digital media skills can become citizen journalists, giving them an outlet to share their personal experiences while participating in online social justice movements (Sobre-Denton, 2015, p. 1717). MMP thus supports a communication-based sense of diversity and inclusion, as citizen journalists can share and amplify their stories from their subjective standpoints, bringing new voices and perspectives into our public deliberations.

Future Communication scholarship will be required to explore how new media can promote community-building and social justice, as the Media Mobilization Project has done for the last decade in Philadelphia and South Jersey. Many stories remain untold. Let us celebrate the work of the Media Mobilization Project, while developing new scholarship to examine the role digital media may play in the improvement of the global human condition.

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## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: THE MEDIA MOBILIZING PROJECT



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**SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS AND COMMUNICATION SCHOLARSHIP** have traveled similar trajectories, orbiting the intersection of storytelling and digital media. Philadelphia's Media Mobilizing Project circles that intersection, demonstrating deep trends that current media research leaves in landscapes of digital practice and theory, while also providing Communication scholars with potential case studies for future consideration.

From community training in media literacy, digital production, and digital distribution to understanding specific community human rights and social justice needs, the Media Mobilizing Project coordinates advocacy and activism with individuals who can serve as leaders, and with other organizations that can serve as partners to extend and stabilize the project's strategic communication efforts. These media strategies aim to be self-sustaining projects that are focused on moving communities, policies, and political actors toward the structural changes needed to remove barriers from and create opportunities for realizing social justice.

Finally, the Media Mobilizing Project's process necessitates navigating areas of Communication scholarship such as digital political economies, freedom of speech, internet infrastructure policies, strategic and political communication, and digital literacies. Current Communication scholarship in digital storytelling, paired with works concerning identity, mediated activism, coalition-building, and digital social justice, may help the Media Mobilizing Project foster, further, and accelerate its mission.

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## 215 PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE



215 People's Alliance  
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### WHAT WE DO

Our Mission: 215 People's Alliance is a multi-racial collaborative dedicated to fighting for equity and justice in Philadelphia—at the ballot box, and in the streets. We advocate for racial and economic justice, including issues such as fully funding public PK-12 schools, pushing for school board members to be democratically elected, setting a \$15 minimum wage, and ending stop-and-frisk policies. We are parents and neighbors, teachers and students, union members and block captains, cab drivers and cashiers working to unite a broad sector of Philadelphians to make meaningful change.

### COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES/ISSUES

215 People's Alliance has made great in-roads into both grassroots and social media activism. The organization has a staff that is dedicated to informing the public about issues, such as public schooling, policing, and fair pay. Although the organization has a strong presence within the greater Philadelphia area, there is room for communication professionals to amplify the organization's advocacy by providing avenues for their advocacy to be nationally read and recognized. This need is particularly true in cases where an issue that affects Philadelphia (e.g., the dissolution of public schools) is part of a larger national conversation. Communication professionals' work with this group should be characterized by a willingness to build upon the strong foundation that the group has already established while showing/providing new opportunities for outreach.

### CURRENT NEEDS

Although 215 People's Alliance has a network of people who identify and critique how centralized power is used to control, oppress, and limit workaday peoples' lives, more can be done. Communication professionals could conduct investigative work about the relationships among politicians, corporations, and powerful elites so that the organization could better articulate those issues to outlets within and beyond the greater Philadelphia area. For example, communication professionals could analyze the rhetorical ploys that are used to obfuscate oppressive systems, investigate the way that economic interests within and beyond Philadelphia corrupt democratic control and deliberation, and shed light on the political economy that nurtures and sustains oppressive policies in Philadelphia communities. Such work would aid the organization's efforts to name the organizations and individuals who work to undermine the democratic social structure and put everyday citizens at risk.

### POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING BENEFITS

The 215 People's Alliance does not need training in media outreach or public advocacy. Rather, its needs are more concerned with how communication professionals can (1) amplify its already strong tradition of outreach and (2) provide research that identifies the ways that crony capitalists, legislators, and lobbyists undermine racial and economic justice.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: 215 PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE



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COMMUNICATION SCHOLARSHIP HAS A STRONG RECORD OF UTILIZING METHODS that can address the issues 215 People's Alliance focuses on via its mission. Communication scholars are uniquely poised to address the ways that powerful interests invoke a range of rhetorical ploys to obfuscate their attempts to undermine democratic participation. For example, discourse analysis, political economy analysis, and critical rhetoric are all approaches to Communication scholarship that may aid the organization's efforts to identify and challenge oppressive structures. Simultaneously, there are scholar-activist groups (e.g., Prison *Communication*, Activism, Research, and Education) that may connect with 215 People's Alliance's struggle to radically reform the prison-industrial complex. In short, Communication scholars can find a great deal of overlap between their interests in communication, culture, and power and 215 People's Alliance's activism and outreach.

Although Communication scholars have the methodological and theoretical tools that are required to address some of 215 People's Alliance's areas of advocacy, there are important gaps. Specifically, Communication scholars have rarely applied critical, rhetorical, or discursive approaches to one of the organization's primary areas of activism: public schooling. For example, the ways that charter schools siphon public monies from traditional public schools while articulating these so-called reforms through concepts of "choice," "accountability," and "responsibility" is a topic that is virtually invisible among Communication scholars. To be useful to this organization, future Communication scholarship will need to better address the discursive, systemic, and ideological components of public goods (e.g., education, health, and fair wages) and how to challenge powerful interests that undermine those foundations in their attempt to solidify their power.

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## PHILADELPHIA JOBS WITH JUSTICE



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### WHAT WE DO

Our mission: Philadelphia Area Jobs with Justice is a coalition of labor unions and student, community, and faith groups. Together, we fight for the fair treatment of workers, organizing in local communities and workplaces. We believe in long-term, multi-issue coalition building, grassroots base-building, organizing, and strategic militant action as the foundation for building a workers' movement, and we believe that by engaging a broad community of allies, we can win bigger victories.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: PHILADELPHIA JOBS WITH JUSTICE



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I SPOKE WITH PHILADELPHIA JOBS WITH JUSTICE ([www.phillyjwj.org](http://www.phillyjwj.org)), whose website describes the group as “a coalition of labor unions and student, community, and faith groups united in our shared work fighting for the rights of all working people--in the workplace, in our neighborhoods, in the media, and on the picket line. We work together in solidarity and in reciprocity, showing our support for each other’s struggles.” This remarkable organization’s work therefore dovetails nicely with a long tradition of Communication scholarship on the rhetoric of labor movements, which has explored how labor organizations, for more than 200 years, have used a variety of communication outlets, strategies, and actions to call attention to and fight for the rights and well-being of workers.

Communication scholarship may provide insights on how organizations such as Philly Jobs with Justice can reinstate and popularize the cause of labor in a contemporary, neoliberal climate that has paved the way for ideas and processes that are hostile to organized labor. Philly Jobs with Justice and similar labor organizations must communicate with diverse audiences and must address urgent issues. These issues include, but are not limited to, “right to work” legislation, corporate privatization of public resources (e.g., proposed privatization of the Philadelphia water system), and a growing precarious workforce. Communication scholars may be able to delineate communication strategies that are tailored to specific audiences, such as youth, retirees, immigrants, non-English speaking workers, etc. And, a Communication perspective may suggest ways to broaden organized labor’s appeal to constituents who have misconceptions about organized labor that are fueled by corporate media distortions or media blackouts.

Second, Communication scholarship can lend insight to the ways Philly Jobs with Justice can forge solidarity with workers who are marginalized within or, at times, excluded by organized labor (e.g., unpaid care workers, part-time or contract workers). The influence of neoliberal policies that promote corporate profit at the expense of the needs and rights of workers worldwide makes local organizing across lines of immigrant status, occupation,

race, gender identity, as well as international solidarity, a particularly important goal. The insights provided by Communication scholarship may provide ideas on how Philly Jobs with Justice can connect the dots between the oppression of workers in Philly and that of workers worldwide.

Communication labor scholars should do more to make their insights applicable to the needs and concerns of existing labor organizations even as they look to the past as a storehouse for rhetorical strategies and actions that may still prove successful. Communication scholarship may be able to suggest rhetorical tacks, methods for establishing solidarity, and digital messaging strategies. However, Communication labor scholars must first *listen* to local labor organizations, or even better, become involved in on-the-ground labor struggles to make their studies relevant. A scholar's firsthand involvement with the organization will undoubtedly provide insights to the needs, concerns, and strategies of Philly Jobs with Justice. Scholars may become activist consultants, activist participants, or even activists(!). In this way, Communication scholars can make their work relevant to more than a small cadre of academics.

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## PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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### WHAT WE DO

Our mission: Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) Philadelphia promotes social responsibility by protecting health, the environment, and communities through education, training, direct service, and advocacy.

PSR Philadelphia is a public health, 501c3 non-profit organization which fulfills its mission by developing programs that are focused on health and the environment and working with youth. Comprised of a variety of health professionals, PSR Philadelphia is uniquely equipped to speak to threats posed to public health in our

region. Our program directors have cultivated programs that are innovative and cost-effective, and offer services and a voice to our community and the region that simply would not exist otherwise. Indeed, while phrases like “First, do no harm,” sound good, in reality, the bottom line is often considered the most important measure of progress or success. Our programs are preventive in nature and seek to address upstream problems that are difficult to solve later on.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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**PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (PSR)** is a doctor-led activist organization that works to educate and protect publics from the consequences of nuclear war, climate change, and environmental contamination. PSR grew out of physician concerns about nuclear proliferation during the Cold War. In the early 1960s, PSR published a report documenting radioactive strontium-90, a byproduct of nuclear weapons testing, in children’s teeth, and pushed to eradicate the atmospheric nuclear testing that was responsible for such human contamination. In 1985, PSR and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) received a joint Nobel Peace Prize for their work toward ending the international nuclear arms build-up. In 1992, PSR expanded its mission to include environmental health and now boasts more than 50,000 members, 30 state chapters, and 39 student chapters (PSR, 2017). Leaders and members create written materials, testify before Congress, offer media interviews, and conduct educational programs to counter nuclear proliferation and environmental threats. Issues addressed by PSR include coal’s threats to public health, citizens’ exposure to environmental toxins, nuclear power’s dirty legacy, and the effects of climate change on vulnerable populations. Given its members’ longstanding interest in the intersection of medical, health, and policy issues, PSR has affinities with several areas of Communication studies, including, but not limited to, health communication, deliberation, the rhetoric of health and medicine, environmental communication, organizational communication, and social justice communication. Below, I review how Communication scholars and teachers can partner with PSR on research and engaged Communication scholarship in two broad areas: health activism and translation.

First, scholars working in and across areas such as health communication, the rhetoric of health and medicine (Scott et al., 2013), environmental communication, community organizing, democratic deliberation, and social justice can partner with PSR to enact *health activism*, which Zoller (2005, p. 341) defines as “efforts, often grassroots, to change norms, social structures, policies, and power relationships in the health arena.” In this way, Communication scholars can collaborate with PSR local chapters and national leaders to develop, analyze, test, and refine public messaging about nuclear and climate risks to determine how and whether PSR health campaigns are having their desired effect. Moreover, Communication scholars and practitioners can work with PSR to identify appropriate and effective methods, tactics, appeals, narratives, and imagery for raising awareness and stimulating social change about health-related public issues and to promote policies that support healthier public policy choices. Formative research can also trace how public debates about nuclear and environmental health issues have historically been framed and analyze the networks of power and influence over nuclear and climate health issues (e.g., Spoel & James, 2006). Methods employed can range from critical discourse analysis, content analysis, design thinking, and rhetorical criticism, to participant observation, interviewing, ethnography, deliberative inquiry, and more (Carcasson & Sprain, 2016; Middleton et al., 2013). Scholars and practitioners can also perform

environmental health-related community organizing (Endres et. al., 2009) and stage environmental justice critical interruptions (Pezzullo, 2001). NCA members who are working on deliberative democracy could also design and host a public forum on the risks of and remedies to nuclear and environmental contamination (Carcasson & Sprain, 2016). Community organizers can suggest best practices for PSR coalition-building (Chávez, 2011), and Communication educators can employ service-learning and communication activism pedagogy (Frey & Palmer, 2014) in both campaign creation and public deliberation that could span courses in environmental communication, social movements, digital design, leadership, and health communication. In short, a raft of collaborative health activism scholarship and teaching possibilities exists.

Second, NCA members who are specializing in science communication, technical communication, science and medical journalism, technical writing, and digital communication are well-poised to collaborate with PSR on projects that translate biomedical and environmental science about the health risks of nuclear proliferation, environmental contamination, and climate change into language that would be accessible by wider publics. These initiatives could work in tandem with any of the above-listed health activism projects, and the potential for service learning exists in these translation efforts as well. In short, by engaging in health activism projects, service learning, and translation efforts, Communication scholars, practitioners, and educators, in concert with PSR, can work toward a healthier world.

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## RAGING CHICKEN PRESS



**Raging Chicken Press**

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### WHAT WE DO

Raging Chicken Press, based in Kutztown, PA, is a left/progressive media site that is devoted to covering and helping build on-the-ground activism and communities of resistance. Raging Chicken Press was founded in April 2011 by Kevin Mahoney on the heels of nationwide attacks on working people, public education, and organized labor. Raging Chicken Press publishes a monthly issue in addition to real-time commentary and reporting on protests, rallies, and other events. What began in Wisconsin as an attack on workers' right to collectively bargain quickly spread to Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Idaho, Florida, New Jersey, New York, and our home state of

Pennsylvania. What initially appeared to be the work of a “rogue” governor in Wisconsin showed itself to be a coordinated, well-funded effort by a new breed of Republicans and their corporate backers. Raging Chicken Press seeks to publish articles, analyses, reports, photos, videos, comics, reviews, and calls-to-action that engage, support, and help build progressive, activist social movements.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: RAGING CHICKEN PRESS



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**THE RAGING CHICKEN PRESS IS** “a left/progressive media site devoted to covering and helping build on-the-ground activism and communities of resistance” (Mahoney, 2016). The intersection of this civic need and Communication scholarship has existed under different monikers over the past century, to include alternative media, community media, independent media, and radical media, to name just a few. Because of the inherent obfuscation of the nature and definition of varying types of “good” and “bad” media, many scholars (Atton, 2002; Meadows, Forde, Ewart, & Foxwell, 2009; Rennie, 2009; Rodríguez, 2001) have determined sub-categories of alternative media to try to clarify this delineation. For example, within these typologies, alternative media is understood as fighting oppressive structures; such groups are therefore subversive in nature and take an oppositional stance against the mainstream media and the corporations that own it. Community media is often understood as “endorsing community governance” and trying “to maintain community concerns” by “valuing community expression as a necessary alternative to public service and commercial media” (Rennie, 2009, p. 157). Radical media refers to “media, generally small-scale and in many different forms, that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives” (Downing, 2001, p. v). Across these definitions, it is generally accepted that small-scale media groups seek to open dialogue with and dissent from larger, dominant power systems while creating internal organizational configurations that flatten hierarchical power structures, thus creating more democratic processes. As I learned from our conversations, Raging Chicken Press traverses all these categories, for it is a regional media source that is dedicated to questioning power structures and building democratic practices within local communities.

Whole sub-disciplines of Communication have emerged around the issues Raging Chicken Press addresses, including Communication for Social Change, Communication for Development, and Media Activism (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Rodríguez, Kidd, & Stein, 2009; Stein, Kidd, & Rodríguez, 2009). Looking forward, I see the future of Communication scholarship transcending such boundaries and converging across disciplines, universities, communities, and borders. Now more than ever, we will see empowered citizens use technology to disseminate their voices and perspectives; more and more of us will begin to question mainstream media and create our own news and entertainment. As Downing (2001) points out, this will happen with people from all walks of life and will include viewpoints from an infinite array of political perspectives.

Communication scholarship can learn from organizations such as Raging Chicken Press to understand how to mobilize and galvanize community members to become involved and move beyond apathy to create social change. Researchers can (and should!) build sustainable relationships with community partners to share university assets and resources with the community. Scholars should work with community media organizations to create mutually beneficial relationships that ultimately strengthen the bond of the community and fight for

social justice. In particular, working with Raging Chicken Press and similar grassroots media groups will enable Communication scholars to merge our critical, academic skills with our media production and community organizing skills, thus lending a holistic blend of talents to civic engagement efforts.

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## PHILLY RED UMBRELLA ALLIANCE



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### WHAT WE DO

We are an all-volunteer collective dedicated to ending stigma and violence toward sex workers through labor organizing, advocacy, and decriminalization. This alliance is committed to the belief that people of all genders have the autonomy and right to decide for themselves whether or not to be in this line of work. Recognizing the violence and other forms of human rights violations that stem from criminalization and stigmatization, we wish to counter this through public education, documentation, and community organizing. We are based in New Jersey, but partner with the Philadelphia chapter.



## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: THE PHILLY RED UMBRELLA ALLIANCE



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**OUR CONVERSATION WITH THE PHILADELPHIA RED UMBRELLA PROJECT** touched on several issues that are related to Communication scholarship.

First, one of the primary barriers to social justice for sex workers is the stigma that is attached to sex work, which tacitly condones its criminalization. The criminalization of sex work increases harm to workers by creating an underground economy in which coercion, violence, and labor abuses are more likely, and by placing barriers between sex workers and law enforcement, social workers, and public health agencies. Thus, grassroots advocacy efforts to address the immediate needs of a stigmatized labor force have focused on decriminalization and harm reduction as a set of practical strategies for minimizing the risks associated with sex work, emphasizing unconditional respect and compassion, and aiming to empower individual sex workers and to enhance the quality of their lives.

Second, discursive frameworks that privilege “rescue” over “rights” exacerbate injustice. Dominant narratives of “rescue” assume false consciousness on behalf of the worker, undermine efforts at destigmatization and decriminalization, and necessitate an exit from sex work as the telos of advocacy efforts. Moreover, the rhetoric of rescue erroneously conflates sex work with human trafficking. Sex worker advocates maintain that trafficking and exploitation are egregious human rights violations, and believe that decriminalization will enable victims of trafficking to seek help more immediately.

These issues are fundamentally communicative—intimately bound to our collective capacity to confront stigma and to reframe sex work as a form of labor worthy of protection, care, and dignity.

Scholars might draw upon feminist organizational, rhetorical, and media scholarship that (a) traces processes that attach value and/or stigma to particular occupations; (b) challenges the idea that work is absent of sex and sexuality; (c) reframes an association between work and rationality, one that obscures the masculinized, heteronormative, coercive–violent practices that lead to sexual harassment and assault of workers in many occupations; and (d) identifies the discursive disconnections and links between pleasure and work. Each of these strands of research can support efforts to decriminalize sex work, interrupt stigma, challenge a rescue narrative, and advance harm reduction.

Some strands of feminism have inadvertently supported, rather than challenged, the criminalization of sex work. Importantly, complex discussions of the relationship between sexuality and violence have sometimes been oversimplified to suggest that sex work is violence. To be mindful of this risk, Communication scholars should

center sex workers' own understandings of consent and agency rather than relying on moralized frameworks that can buttress a rescue narrative.

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## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: THE PHILLY RED UMBRELLA ALLIANCE



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ACTIVISTS AND ALLIES FROM THE RED UMBRELLA ALLIANCE ARE DEDICATED to promoting, defending, and advocating for the human rights of sex workers in the state of New Jersey and in the greater Philadelphia area. My discussion with the groups about the role of Communication in their civic initiatives revealed several areas to which future Communication scholarship may contribute, especially by merging our work with findings from social work and social welfare.

Much of what NJRUA advocates for hinges on the notion of harm-reduction, a principle that says enlightened social policies should seek not to end contested social behaviors (as indicated in the phrase "zero tolerance"), but to mitigate their negative consequences on impacted communities. Sex worker harm-reduction strategies can be difficult for politicians, policy makers, and the public to understand (Rekart, 2006), as communication frameworks for understanding sex workers have been dominated by the language of trafficking, criminality, and moral judgment (Capous, 2007). Thus, for Communication scholars seeking to support the work of NJRUA and their allied groups, some key tasks involve helping to unpack cultural stereotypes about sex work and sex workers, helping the public

make sense of the complex forms of agency and victimhood involved, and beginning the hard work of showing how current criminalizing and marginalizing policies tend to add new layers of harm.

NJRSA advocates talked specifically about the need to challenge the dehumanizing stigmas that circulate around sex work. An important Communication scholarship agenda, then, would involve the study of how sex work is represented in media texts (Hallgrimdottir, Phillips, Benoit 2006). In conjunction with debunking mediated communication habits about sex work, NJRSA suggested that Communication scholars focus their work on the complicated question of how entrenched communication patterns drive both policy-making and the delivery (or blockage) of harm-reduction services in local communities.

Advocates also spoke of the need for media production skills and research methods that are centered on the lived experiences of sex workers; in both cases, NJRSA pointed to the need for media advocacy and research featuring the voices of sex workers, especially their work in promoting harm-reduction. Indeed, research shows that the voices of sex workers themselves are conspicuously absent in most current medical research and policy-making contexts. Addressing this silence is a key communication task. Capous (2014) explored the use of photo-voice with sex workers as a useful strategy of alternative knowledge production and resistance, thus indicating how Communication scholars are uniquely positioned to explore a wide variety of participatory research and media production practices.

By way of additional collaborations, NJRSA suggested that Communication scholars might explore ways to highlight the interconnected work of other harm-reduction programs such as Prevention Point Philadelphia and Hearts on a Wire. Future Communication scholarship could also focus on how these organizations can forge better connections to effective strategies such as the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Program (LEAD), thus tracking the movement from grassroots groups to public policy and implementation.

Finally, amid the flurry of stigmatizing communication about sex work, NJRSA emphasized the interpersonal nature of its work. Connecting with sex workers to advance harm-reduction strategies means having hard conversations about clean needles, accessible condoms, daily labor practices, and so much more; therefore, successful activists must be both knowledgeable and compassionate communicators within these complex economies (Barrington, 2009). Doing this work entails building trust and rapport between non-sex worker advocates, sex workers, and various publics, thus pointing to a blend of participatory research, interpersonal communication, media debunking, and policy advocacy.

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## SAVED ME



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### WHAT WE DO

Our Mission: Our central mission involves saving lives. Saved Me Inc. is a nonprofit organization focused on saving dogs and cats from shelters that are forced to euthanize animals due to a limited amount of space. We provide high-quality medical care, shelter, food, and a safe and healthy environment for our rescues. Saved Me is dedicated to improving and enriching the quality of life of abused, abandoned, and neglected pets. We provide high-quality care and rehabilitation for dogs and cats of all shapes and sizes. Our volunteers work with pets directly, providing individualized rehabilitation to help them get adopted.

### COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES/ISSUES

Like many small nonprofits, our chief communication challenge is keeping our supporters informed about the current events, achievements, and needs of our organization through newsletters and website updates.

### CURRENT NEEDS

We are interested in reaching our local target market of potential pet owners and getting them engaged in volunteering, donating, and adopting. Any research or analysis that would contribute to these efforts would be most welcome.

### POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING BENEFITS

Social media and overall media relations are areas where we could improve.

## NCA SCHOLAR: SAVED ME



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COMMUNICATION, A DYNAMIC AND PRACTICAL FIELD, IS IDEALLY POSITIONED to explore the relationships between humans and animals, and especially those social justice efforts aimed at animal fostering, rescuing, and adoption. Communication scholar-activists can also consider the roles animals play in family systems and interpersonal relationships, and in the ways animal advocacy impacts other movements, such as environmental sustainability. The interdisciplinary subfield of Critical Animals Studies argues that animals have a “voice,” agency, and a unique standpoint, meaning the exploitation of animals is related to other forms of oppression. In short,

Communication teachers and scholars have much to offer to, and to learn from, collaborations with animals and groups advocating for animal rights. As we begin that journey toward collaboration and care, I would offer Saved Me as a model organization, as its work with and for animals embodies the best notions of social justice while expanding our frame of reference to include both humans and animals.

One route of future collaboration between Communication scholars and animal rights activists could focus our attention on the growing use of animals in assisting humans as service companions, emotional supports, and/or therapy roles. Animals are being called upon more and more to assist humans in therapeutic contexts, such as working with those on the autism spectrum, serving individuals in hospice, working with injured veterans, or acting as emotional supports in prisons. Thus, the relationships between humans and animals point to new areas of research in health communication which would benefit from interdisciplinary work in environmental studies, Critical Animal Studies, and Communication activism.

At its core, the process of communication involves both the exchange of information and creating relationships. As a result, the field of Communication can speak to the civic needs of Saved Me by highlighting animals and their multiple roles in human relationships. Because humans are themselves “animals,” the recognition of the interrelationship and interconnectedness of human and nonhuman animals serves to “humanize” versus “dehumanize” nonhuman animals. Within an interconnected, relational view, communication strategies that aim to advance animal advocacy projects could benefit from placing interconnectedness, compassion, and empathy at the forefront of rescue, shelter, and foster efforts, especially in the cases of abused, abandoned, or neglected animals. Indeed, as we expand our notion of Communication’s civic callings, working with and for animals means placing care, collaboration, and kindness at the heart of our agenda.

To “humanize” nonhuman animals, not in the anthropomorphic sense, but more in the post-humanist one, means acknowledging that nonhuman animals also form relationships, suffer loss and pain, experience their own unique emotional expressions, and have their own standpoint, voice, and agency. To do so, nonhuman animal rights could be positioned alongside ongoing struggles associated with global human rights, and Communication could easily explicate an ethical approach to interactions between human and nonhuman animals that does not involve categorically crafting reasons why humans are superior to their nonhuman animal counterparts. Thinking about communication with and for nonhuman animals therefore means, first and foremost, eschewing any sense of human exceptionalism—we are not the masters of the world, just fellow inhabitants of it.

Establishing empathy awareness regarding nonhuman animals with children and young adults should be central to any communication strategy that prioritizes developing deeper human and nonhuman animal relational bonds and networks. By attempting to further “humanize” the relationship between humans and nonhuman animals in ways that integrate new understandings of technology and our shared social environment, children and adults might be encouraged to intervene more readily into unjust discourses involving nonhuman animal abuse, neglect, and abandonment, offering sanctuary and rescue for nonhuman animals in need as Saved Me Inc. does. Situating Communication’s role as a storytelling medium across media channels would further this goal tremendously.

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## TEENSHOP, INC.



Teenshop, Inc.  
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### WHAT WE DO

What began as an enrichment program for girls at a Philadelphia church has grown to five chapters in three states, and has helped more than 8,000 girls of color from all zip codes achieve their goals and become productive citizens and leaders in their communities and careers. While enrolled in Teenshop, no girl drops out of school or becomes a teen parent, and all graduates matriculate to college.

Teenshop was founded by Emmy Award-Winning journalist Elleonor Jean Hendley, while she was working fulltime at CBS 3 TV as the education news reporter and talk show host/producer of *City Lights*, a prime-time weekend magazine show. Ms. Hendley wanted to share her time, talent, and treasure to make a difference in the lives of teenage girls. As a former New Jersey public school teacher who created and directed an award-winning after-school dance and charm club, Ms. Hendley knew firsthand how extra-curricular activities build self-esteem and help students achieve.

The Teenshop curriculum is an innovative series of life skills workshops, college preparatory initiatives, and community service projects. Ms. Hendley had never considered expanding the program beyond her former church home, but interest quickly grew, and after years of repeated requests, a new chapter was affiliated in 1990. There are currently three Philadelphia chapters, one in Los Angeles, California, and one in Camden, New Jersey, each under the leadership of five outstanding female volunteers. More than 125 girls enroll annually. Through the years, Teenshop alumnae, now successful working women, have returned to assume leadership positions in their former chapters.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: TEENSHOP, INC.



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WHEN PHILADELPHIA-BASED TEENSHOP WELCOMES A NEW GROUP OF MEMBERS, their very first workshop will likely come as a surprise: Teen girls are immediately taught how to play chess. New members are paired with older members and returning club mentors, and chess play becomes a familiar first hour of the club's subsequent meetings. But Teenshop isn't your typical chess club; in fact, it's not really a chess club at all. Rather, Teenshop is a girls' college preparatory program whose members pledge to be "productive, concerned, and positive citizens." And, as Teenshop's Founder and CEO Elleonor Jean Hendley explained to me, "Chess teaches critical thinking. It forces our girls to slow down and be more intentional with their thoughts and actions." To this end, adult women (primarily graduates of Teenshop themselves) mentor teenage girls by introducing them to unfamiliar spaces (e.g., college classrooms) through previously unfamiliar exercises

(e.g., chess), to help them envision their rightful place in the academy—and this process is slow, self-reflexive, and methodical. In addition to learning how to prepare for success in college, Teenshop members are encouraged to give back to their communities through their “Shoes for Life” collection drive, Women’s History Month programming, and ongoing opportunities to learn through doing and giving.

The importance of mentoring as an interactive process that is central to individuals, organizations, and diverse communities is increasingly relevant to Communication scholars (Buell, 2004). As Hendley noted, Teenshop’s mentors help to “raise other mothers’ daughters.” In this way, Teenshop follows a feminist paradigm of mentoring, whereby mentors can acknowledge and repay their debts to other women who have led them successfully and carefully into adulthood (Bell, Golombisky, Singh, & Hirschmann, 2000). Similarly, for women and girls of color, this model of mentoring, of bridge-building between local communities and college campuses, helps to signal a “homeplace” for diverse identities within the alienating space of higher education (Calafell, 2007).

Of course, empowering youth and communities is incredibly tricky when embedded within larger social structural systems that all too frequently disenfranchise non-normative identities, bodies, and life experiences (Collins, 2000). In speaking with Ms. Hendley, I asked her directly how Communication scholars and pedagogues might help in her mission. Hendley queried me about workshops I’ve conducted on gendered media literacy and political engagement and was genuinely intrigued as to how she might adapt such exercises into the Teenshop mentoring model. From Hendley’s perspective, Teenshop has a strong infrastructure for connecting girls with invested mentors and is well-connected with its established community partners, but she sees an important point of connection between improving girls’ civic participation through increased self-reflexiveness about their co-constructed identities. Social justice-oriented pedagogues seeking opportunities to team our teaching and research with local organizations that seek youth empowering could successfully create conversation about ongoing mentoring scholarship with work on Communication activism pedagogy (CAP) (e.g., Frey & Palmer, 2014). Such a direction for future scholarship might productively investigate intersections between empowerment models that are grounded in media literacy and youth media organizations (Hobbs & Yoon, 2008), critiques of mediated girlhood (e.g., Acosta-Alzuru & Kreshel, 2002; Kearney, 2011), mentoring for typically disenfranchised learners such as ESL students and first-generation college students (e.g., Moreman & Non Grata, 2011; Wang, 2012), and mentoring as a practice of feminist social justice activism.

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## TS HAWKINS



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### WHAT WE DO

Our Mission: TS Hawkins is an internationally recognized author, performance poet, and arts educator. Her publications include: *Sugar Lumps and Black Eye Blues*; *Confectionately, Yours*; *Mahogany Nectar*; *Lil Black Book: all the long stories short*; *The Hotel Haikus*; and *The Secret Life of Wonder: a prologue in G* [play]. Merging the arts with media literacy, TS Hawkins aims to get youth to think creatively to develop the educational tools and the desire necessary to change the world, one movement at a time. From the page to the stage, youth can showcase their activism through project-based learning models and community engagement strategies.

### COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES/ISSUES

I wish I had access to more high-quality technology to raise the production value of the media that the youth produce. Currently, I am working with an outdated laptop and low-grade editing software.

### CURRENT NEEDS

Since the summer of 2015, I have assisted Philadelphia youth interested in producing a radio podcasting channel; the channel featured the stories that these youth wanted and needed to share with a wider audience. This required me, along with the youth, to investigate podcasting rubrics, FCC regulations, and hosting services. Additionally, youth were required to research audience-specific trends and concerns, and to facilitate focus groups to pitch final concepts to a panel. Each of these steps highlighted the strengths of each youth and allowed them to produce six radio episodes that were spellbinding, informative, and entertaining. Any communication research or analysis that would train future participants in such methods—or would provide additional, useful data—would be most welcome.

### POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING BENEFITS

A training in social media for advocacy—in other words, social media training tailored exclusively to social justice work—would help broaden the horizons of my current efforts and youth facilitation. As an Arts & Media Literacy Program Specialist, I work with youth who have a plethora of truths to share with broader audiences, but their messages too often get lost in the delivery. It would be grand if communication training could provide a framework that would allow young voices to be heard in a clear and dynamic way—a framework that would support both their social justice advocacy and their emotional intelligence.



## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: TS HAWKINS



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**TS HAWKINS'S WORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE HIGHLIGHTS** the many ways Communication scholarship may speak to her needs as an educator and "arts activist." An independent contractor, Hawkins partners with an array of community groups to raise awareness, create safe spaces, and intervene in social injustices. She currently partners with the Attic, Philadelphia's only exclusively LGBTQ youth organization, to produce "The Rainbow Experience," a podcast created by high school students to address LGBTQ community members and issues. Hawkins has also partnered with the Irondale Theater Company in Brooklyn, where she worked with local police to teach officers how to "switch the narrative and their practice." She uses theater techniques such as role-playing to teach police officers how to de-escalate situations. Hawkins' poems comment on racist violence, black empowerment, and associated movements such as #SayHerName.

One key civic need Hawkins identifies is finding organizations to sponsor and create programming to serve youth. Perhaps Communication scholars can support this need by forming a network that enables the Social Justice Exchange to live on in a series of workshops and ongoing partnerships. This network would consist of scholars who engage as activists for social justice and those who practice "CAR" (Communication activism research, Carragee & Frey, 2016), participant-activism (Rodino-Colocino 2012), participatory (action) research (Fals-Borda, 1984), and other modes of research that draw on scholars' direct action in movements for social justice (Chaves, 2013; Howard, 2014; Rand, 2014; Wolfson, 2014). Hawkins' work reminds us that such projects can and should focus on the needs of disempowered youth.

In addition, Hawkins' work may inform a range of future Communication scholarship. Especially promising is her use of performance and role-playing as communicative practices (i.e., performance studies), her use of dyadic role playing (i.e., interpersonal communication), and her efforts to develop grassroots media created independently of corporate-owned media (i.e., political economy of communication; media activism).

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## YOUTH UNITED FOR CHANGE



**YOUTH  
UNITED FOR CHANGE**

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### WHAT WE DO

Our mission: Youth United for Change (YUC) helps young leaders in Philadelphia develop a critical political, historical, and economic understanding of society, and empowers them to improve the quality of their lives and communities. At YUC, low-income young people organize campaigns that are geared toward ensuring high-quality public education for all young Philadelphians. YUC wins positive educational policy changes through school- and community-based organizing. A diverse group of young people comes together to identify common concerns and act collectively as key stakeholders to create strategies to influence policy-making, with the goal of carrying out comprehensive educational reforms in the Philadelphia public school system. YUC's model of youth-led advocacy helps students have a voice in creating systemic change, as they simultaneously develop themselves as critical young leaders.

## NCA SCHOLAR RESPONSE: YOUTH UNITED FOR CHANGE



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YOUTH UNITED FOR CHANGE (YUC) IS A YOUTH-LED, DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATION that is dedicated to developing and empowering young leaders in Philadelphia to take collective action to improve the quality of their education and their communities.

YUC instructs youth, their parents, and the community on the history and current practices of oppression and discrimination that keep Black and Brown communities struggling for societal transformation. The work focuses first on detailing the historical struggle in which today's injustices exist, and then on fostering human development and leadership skills to effect a redistribution of power to improve education in the city of Philadelphia. For example, to achieve community control of schools, YUC wants the school district to imbue its School Advisory Councils with meaningful decision-making power. Philadelphia has been wracked by the impact of deindustrialization, redlining, and educational austerity, with only 57 percent of high school students graduating in four years. YUC recognizes that students, with involvement from their entire community, need the opportunity to gain the knowledge and leadership capacities they need to govern spaces, workplaces, and programs that can meet the needs of all people, not just the privileged races and classes.

The organization needs a website and logo update, and it is hiring a communication specialist to develop more sophisticated strategies. YUC, now celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a progressive force for change, wants to articulate a politic that is currently lacking in Black social movements. YUC aims to advance a deeper analysis of self-determination so that students learn to control their collective destinies and effect social transformation. Toward this end, YUC recognizes that education must extend beyond its after-school program to the broader community with newspaper op-eds and reflections.

YUC sees a vital need for fostering intergenerational activity and for people to understand their complicity in persistent social injustices and then work against those. As part of this education, training on gender matters is needed as well.

YUC would also benefit from assistance in securing more opportunities, dates, and locations to speak with and train people in its model of community organizing and social analysis.

YUC needs white people, including scholars and college students, to be allies with the organization, recognizing that white supremacy requires dismantling to achieve an equitable society. White allies are needed to support Black Power, support the leadership development of Black youth, and participate in transformative organizing, which confronts race and class oppression so that positive, material changes result for people of color.

YUC aims to advance democratic education and community organizing, activities that are largely absent in public schools and communities. Likewise, Communication scholar-activists are concerned about education practices, noting that neoliberal discourse is pervasive (Springer, 2012) with the hegemony of market fundamentalism that undermines teacher expertise and compassion. Students are schooled without adequate opportunity for critical inquiry, and thus are heavily influenced by a culture which celebrates hyper-capitalism as a mechanism of sustaining class inequality. Ultimately, students are largely left without the requisite knowledge, skills, or relationships they need to challenge oppression and promote social change.

Communication scholars are teaching, publishing, and acting on critical, cultural questions surrounding education, race, and class in accordance with YUC's focus. A social justice sensibility (Frey, Pearce, Pollock, Artz, & Murphy, 1996) has inspired others in our field to likewise address unjust systems. Those scholars' contributions can be found in texts about critical pedagogy (Fassett & Warren, 2006), Communication activism (Frey & Palmer, 2014), and social justice Communication research (Swartz, 2006).

From these perspectives, education is decidedly political and should be designed to advance democratic principles by unmasking how power operates within language and ideology, and through relationships. Students benefit from community members, interdisciplinary instruction, and historical accounts that allow them to better understand how communication can address social needs. They also benefit from practicing how to be citizens who work with others to confront and transform injustices. Education thus provides an opportunity to increase capacities, expand resources, and awaken students' ethical sensibilities for social justice.

Educators should see themselves as engaged, public intellectuals, willing to critique antidemocratic forces and to learn from and advance the cause of YUC. Our scholarship needs to delve into the stories and best practices of how we, with students, can imagine possibilities for a future that invests in the common good. Central to that

task is equipping ourselves and our students with the knowledge and tools they need to participate in meaningful dialogue, with critical reason, to demonstrate the social responsibility necessary to engage with the admittedly difficult issues of our time. For example, when someone claims that racism no longer exists, we must remind them it does, and that it is built into the fabric of our country's policies.

Acknowledging our history, to understand why so many people are facing economic hardship, dreams deferred, and perpetual injustices, coupled with examples of how ordinary people can and have changed the world, can be transformative. People working together can and have reduced needless suffering by naming oppressions where they exist, and then taking collective action. Such joint educational work is also community-building work driven by the passion and joy that comes from speaking out and organizing together to voice the will of the people.

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# Resource Guide to Communication Scholarship on Social Justice Activism



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**OVER THE LAST COUPLE OF DECADES**, since the publication of Frey, Pearce, Pollock, Artz, and Murphy's (1996) essay articulating a communication approach to social justice and calling for Communication scholars to conduct such research, the Communication discipline has witnessed an explosion of scholarship exploring relationships among communication, activism, and social justice. That scholarship has included convention presentations and entire convention themes focused on communication and social justice; numerous journal articles, book chapters, and books on that topic; and book series devoted to it (e.g., the University of California Press's series on *Communication and Social Justice Activism*).

In 2015, that critical mass of scholarship resulted in the creation of an institutional home for such research and teaching in the National Communication Association's (NCA) Activism and Social Justice Division. According to the division's description, Communication and social justice activism scholarship is comprised of at least two trajectories: First, in line with then NCA Vice President Stephen Hartnett's vision for the Social Justice Exchange (SJE) at the 2016 NCA Annual Convention in Philadelphia, which highlighted local community activist groups working for social justice, scholars have conducted case studies to document and analyze communicative practices that are enacted by activist groups and organizations to promote social justice. Second, Communication and social justice activism scholarship has featured researcher-activists and

teacher-activists employing their communication resources (e.g., theories, methods, pedagogies, and other practices) in collaboration with community members whose lives are affected by oppression, domination, discrimination, and other sociopolitical struggles due to differences in race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion, and other identity markers. Scholar-activists have also worked with justice-oriented groups, organizations, and social movements to intervene into and reconstruct unjust discourses in more just ways. (NCA, n.d.). This second trajectory has been called “Communication activism scholarship” (see, e.g., Frey & Carragee, 2007). According to Hartnett (2010), Communication activism scholars “approach issues of social justice not only as *sites of research* but also as *callings for engagement* with disadvantaged groups” (p. 78).

To encourage Communication scholars to continue conducting descriptive case studies of activist social justice groups and organizations, as well as to share that scholarship and to aid Communication scholars in transitioning to intervention-oriented Communication activism scholarship, we offer the following resource guide. This guide focuses on *Communication* scholarship (there is a wealth of scholarship in many other disciplines about activism and social justice that readers should consult), which includes work published in Communication outlets (e.g., NCA-sponsored scholarly journals) and work authored by Communication scholars in other disciplinary and interdisciplinary outlets (e.g., *Journal of Social Justice*). There also is much scholarship that is relevant to social justice activism that appears under other labels (e.g., “social change”) that is not included in this guide.

The guide starts with conceptual/theoretical scholarship on social justice activism, divided into work conducted from communication and media perspectives (a common categorization in the Communication discipline). In selecting conceptual/theoretical work, a broad search of the literature was conducted to include as much work as possible. The guide then focuses on empirical Communication research that has been conducted on social justice activism, divided into edited collections of original research studies and work that has been conducted in specific areas of the Communication discipline (including an “other” category). Those specific areas, some of which reflect categories employed in this publication, were chosen because there is a sufficient body of Communication scholarship on social justice activism, and the work in those areas includes both empirical research studies and more general scholarship. Although many studies could be placed into multiple categories (e.g., studies that investigated intersectionalities of gender and race), for brevity, they were placed in only one category. In keeping with the focus of the SJE on local activist groups, empirical research was included if it focused on community-based activist groups (which varied geographically and in terms of size, especially studies of activist media and studies of larger activist movements that might not be considered local in the same sense as, for example, a city group or a nongovernmental organization), either from a descriptive case study approach or from a Communication activism perspective, regardless of research methods employed. Excluded were many other empirical studies that did not examine particular activist groups, with which, in most cases, authors were involved (e.g., studies that surveyed various activist group members or that assessed effects of activist performances on audience members). The guide concludes with pedagogical scholarship about teaching Communication and social justice activism, with a broad search conducted to include conceptual work, empirical research, and pedagogical techniques and activities.

We hope this resource guide proves valuable to Communication scholars (and scholars in other academic disciplines) who study activism and social justice, and that it inspires them to engage in more social justice activism research and teaching. We also hope that the scholarship cited in this resource guide can aid activist groups in their efforts to promote social justice, and that it encourages collaboration with Communication scholars. Such mutually beneficial collaborations, exchanges, and interactions will both infuse social justice activism even further into Communication scholarship and lead activist groups to communicate as effectively as possible, ultimately leading to creating and sustaining a more just world. ■

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## EMPIRICAL COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVISM RESEARCH

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