

FORDHAM
THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Institute for
Women and Girls

- ▼ 1. Title Page & Glossary
- ▼ 2. Advocating for the Rights of All Women: Conference - Erica Udow, MSW Candidate
- ▼ 3. History of the Institute for Women and Girls - Drs. Brownell, Congress, & Turner
- ▼ 4. Social Work Day at the United Nations - Julia Larock, MSW Candidate
- ▼ 5. On Chairing Conferences - Chelsea Bonosky, MSW Candidate
- ▼ 6. Analysis of Asian American and Pacific Islander Stereotypes - Dr. Sameena Azhar



EDITED BY: MICHAEL BUCKHOUT, MSW CANDIDATE

MARCH 2023 | @FORDHAMGSS | #FORDHAMINSTITUTEFORWOMENANDGIRLS



Erica Udow, MSW Candidate

Erica Udow on:
*Advocating for the Rights of
 All Women: The Power of
 Technology and Art*

E: Gender-based oppression is a violation of basic human rights, yet it is on the rise across the globe. The Fordham Institute for Women and Girls will present a conference entitled "Advocating for the Rights of All Women: The Power of Technology and Art," on March 10, 2023 from 5-7pm. This conference will speak to a range of issues facing women today and explore the use of technology and art in addressing these crises, focusing on the current Iranian revolution, the use of technology in women's health issues around the globe, and how dance and art can be modes of advocacy.

On September 16th 2022 Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman, was beaten to death in Tehran, Iran for showing her hair beneath her hijab by the "morality police."

Major protests broke out across Iran in response to this brutal murder, mostly being led by young students and artists across the country, but increasingly supported by Iranians of all generations.

In response to the protests the Islamic Republic shut down the country's internet and slowed down cell phone connectivity in order to hamper the ability of Iranians to organize and to hide the atrocities from the global community. Thousands of protestors have been arrested and court sanctioned executions have begun.

Despite the human rights atrocities being committed by the Islamic Republic police, Iranians are bravely standing up for their rights.

In concert with the *NGO Committee on the Status of Women's CSW 67 conference*, The Women's Institute has invited Mandy Ansari of the *Iranian Diaspora Collective* to give the keynote address about the power of art and technology during this revolution and the role in which social media is playing in supporting social change. Dr Gabrielle Kasper of *International Health Awareness Network (IHAN)* Chair and her medical student from Australia will also present on issues facing women in Australia, and *Alvin Ailey Dance Company* will share a moving performance commenting on the oppression of Black women in America.

Gender-based oppression harms everyone: join us on March 10th to learn about ways we can utilize technology and art to advocate for equity and justice in today's society. ▼

**Sameena Azhar, PhD, LCSW,
 MPH**

On her Research Article, "You're So Exotic Looking: Intersectional Analysis of Asian American and Pacific Islander Stereotypes"

S: "You're So Exotic Looking" is an article that was published in the critical feminist journal, *Affilia*, with my colleagues and friends, Antonia Alvarez at Portland State University, Anne Farina at Seattle University, and Susan Klumpner at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. All four of us met as fellows through the *Council on Social Work Education's Minority Fellowship Program* in 2015. We shared an interest in advancing research on issues impacting Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in social work. We had noticed that there was virtually no recognition of our communities in social work education, and to a large degree in mainstream social work practice and research as well.

The year 2016 was a presidential election and there was a huge rise in xenophobic rhetoric from then presidential candidate Donald J. Trump. At that time, NY Times columnist Michael Luo, shared his own experience with a microaggression in New York City, then called on Asian Americans to share their own experiences as well on Twitter, using the hashtag #thisis2016. Our study entailed a content analysis of over 3,000 tweets, using this hashtag #thisis2016, for themes related to intersectional stereotypes of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (APIs). We were honored that our article won the 2021 *Affilia* Award for Distinguished Feminist Scholarship and Praxis in Social Work.

Explain the "model minority myth" you've addressed in your writing.

The "model minority" myth is a stereotype regarding how Asian Americans perpetually work diligently in professional jobs and continuously accrue upward social mobility. These myths suggest that Asian communities are universally self-reliant, financially successful, and politically uninvolved.

**Turn to Page 6 for the rest of
 Sameena's interview!**

FORDHAM | Graduate School of Social Service
 The GSS Institute for Women and Girls presents
**Advocating for the Rights of All Women:
 The Power of Technology and Art**
 Friday, March 10, 2023
 Location: Lincoln Center Fordham Campus,
 Lowenstein 12th Floor Lounge
 5 - 7 p.m. ET
 The equality, safety, and well-being of all women around the world has been found under siege. This conference will explore how technology and art have been and are being used to address some of these threats.

TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR A REFLECTION FROM OUR FIWG LEADERS

History of the Institute for Women and Girls

Our Birth

A very hot day in June 2001 a small group of women who were faculty members, the Dean of students, and administrative staff met outside of GSS to talk about starting an organization that would represent our feminist values. We envisioned a place where students, faculty, administrators and staff could come together to talk about our ideas and goals for a more feminist and inclusive school. We originally intended to do research and writing on topics related to women's and girls' issues. Fortunately, we had the support of our Dean, Dr. Peter Vaughan, who authorized the hiring of an administrator for the Fordham Institute for Women and Girls.



Mission

Our mission was to promote the well-being of women and girls who experience poverty, violence, health programs and workplace discrimination. The resolution of these persistent problems requires addressing gender, age and racial inequities in order to create a more just and caring society for all. We applied for and received a grant to send a group to do research in China as well as South Africa. We sought to educate ourselves and others about women's issues and we were able to organize a very successful study trip to Belfast, Ireland led by our previous director Dr. Rachel Kammer.

Leadership

Our first director was Dr. Chaya Piotrkowski, who developed the first plan for the Institute and the Mission Statement. She was followed by Dr. Pat Brownell and Julie Ross was the Managing Director. On the Steering Committee were Dr. Susan Egan, Dr Qin Gao, Dr Shirley Gatenio Gabel, Dr Rachelle Kammer and Dr Sandra Turner. We created an advisory Board whose members were Dr. Mimi Abramovitz, Joan Cavanagh, Dr. Nancy Green and Dr. Karen Judd from Unifem. Each new director helped to change and reshape the direction of the center. Dr. Elaine Congress was a long time member of the Women's Institute and became co-chair in 2020.

Newsletter

One of our first projects was to develop a regular newsletter highlighting the various projects (grants, articles, chapters, and teaching strategies) we were working on. The Institute newsletter was initiated under Dr. Brownell, with four newsletters edited by Julie Ross. This project is currently being revived, this time with a student editor, Michael Buckhout, who is a member of the Institute and one of the MSW students in the UN field placement that Dr. Congress oversees.

Expansion of Focus

In the beginning we focused on research, but over the years developed a programmatic approach. Most recently, a focus has been on student activities in collaboration with faculty and Deans. MSW students from the UN student field placement have become involved in planning and speaking at conferences.



Here's the Conference From March 2023

Conferences

Over the years we became very involved in educational projects and have planned many conferences to educate other faculty and staff at Fordham and our larger NYC community about important women's issues.

In March 2003 we organized our first of what was to become a yearly conference at the time of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women's two week conference. This conference is a major UN event that brings thousands of women from all over the world to NYC to learn about and advocate for women's rights. Since 2003 we have had at least one conference a year, and in the past several years we had two conferences a year.



Some of the topics our conferences address have been:

Violence Against Refugee Women
Sex Trafficking
Empowering Rural Women
Women and HIV
Shattering the Glass Ceiling
Rural Women's Health Care
Global Early Childhood Education
Roe v Wade Implications

Conclusion

During the last twenty years we have worked to develop the Fordham Women and Girls Institute. We hope that you will join us in the years ahead to continue our mission of educating and advocating for women's rights at Fordham, in NYC, and beyond. ▼

Pat Brownell, FIWG Chair Emerita
 Elaine Congress, FIWG Co-chair
 Sandy Turner, FIWG Co-Chair

MARCH 2023 | @FORDHAMGSS | #FORDHAMINSTITUTEFORWOMENANDGIRLS

An Interview with Julia Larock: Social Work Day - Student Conference at the United Nations



Julia Larock, MSW Candidate

What are some of the highlights of planning the student conference, "Respecting Diversity Through Joint Social Action"?

J: Personally, I really do love event planning. It has been an honor of mine to work with Kelsey Wills through our representation of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), as well as Eunices Franco with the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and Victoria McMahon who is a MSW Graduate Teaching Assistant at George Mason University. It takes a village to plan an event like this and along with our amazing supervisors, one of the highlights of planning this event has been seeing just how vast, diverse, and accomplished all of our networks are.

Additionally, I've loved working on our introductory video. We made sure that the video had an international component, and as someone who studies foreign languages, I was thrilled to include multiple languages in the video. That particular project really embodied the adage, "nothing about us, without us," and fully represents what joint social action really is. It was a creative way of highlighting lived experiences, and connected our student planning group with organizations and individuals worldwide. This type of engagement, relationship building, and networking is exactly what we hope participants will take away from this conference.

What does "Joint Social Action" mean to you?

J: Joint Social Action is certainly interdisciplinary and intersectional. To me, it's the concept of respecting, working with, and learning from a diverse community in a way in which solutions to challenges or complex circumstances are approached holistically. All people, in all of their diversity problem-solve through advocacy, education, relationship building and engagement. Perspectives are broadened, critical thinking is encouraged, and vulnerable spaces are created for group action through collaboration.



Because the event falls under the UN's "Disability" sub-theme, what types of experience have you had with disability?

J: In my opinion, disability is much broader than society's current definition allows. Although the CDC currently defines disability as "any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions)," the lived experience of individuals with disabilities is much more complex than that. Oftentimes, society's provisions for individuals with disabilities are inclusive only of those with visible, physical disabilities. And yet, the validity of those dealing with cognitive, unseen, and mental disabilities is often questioned.

My mom recently suffered from cardiac sarcoidosis, a rare autoimmune disorder that causes cells to clump together with the potential to disrupt heart function, breathing and sometimes limit mobility.

It was an uphill battle of scans, appointments, and trial and error of medications, but for the most part was not a physically seen disability. However, something tantamount to the discussion of disability is the inclusion of a varied support system. My mom had a fantastic team of medical professionals, as well as the support of her family.

We recognized that the responsibility should not only be on individuals with disabilities to educate others, so we really wanted this event to create a space where additional caretakers, friends, siblings, academics, and students etc. were encouraged to speak on their lived experiences with disability as well.

Generally, what would you like women & girls to take away from this event?

J: The entire student group for planning this event is led entirely by young women. It is very much our intention to provide women and girls with opportunities to advocate for themselves and others, whether that is through presenting as a speaker, networking with others, feeling comfortable to ask questions and gain knowledge on various topics to promote their personal and professional lives, or engaging in challenging discussions. Women and girls in all of their diversity across disciplines should be encouraged to participate in any event in which critical thinking and knowledge acquisition are at the forefront. They should be supported in their pursuit of solutions for global challenges, and they should be welcomed in heterogeneous environments as competent and valued members of the discussion. This is something we hope to make clear in hosting this event. ▼



Click Here for More Information
 about the Student Conference!

TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR CHELSEA BONOSKY, MSW ON CHAIRING CONFERENCES

MARCH 2023 | @FORDHAMGSS | #FORDHAMINSTITUTEFORWOMENANDGIRLS



Chelsea Bonosky, MSW Candidate



Click the Graphic Here to register for the
 NGO CSW 67 Forum (March 5 - March 17)
 and attend Chelsea's panel.

In addition, you'll find hundreds of events
 and connect with thousands of
 participants who share a passion for
 women's rights and gender equality!

Chelsea Bonosky: on Chairing Conferences

C: In the Fall of 2022, I started the final year of my MSW degree and had just begun participating with the *Institute for Women and Girls* (IWG). Its mission of "...promote(ing) gender equality by addressing all forms of discrimination against women and girls locally and globally" resonates with me deeply. My area of focus in my Specialist Year is women's reproductive rights, health, and justice. I believe that all women's rights are human rights and should be acknowledged as such.

It was my first couple weeks on the Board for IWG, and I learned that we plan two conferences each year, one in the Fall and one in the Spring, in conjunction with when the *Convention on the Status of Women* holds its Session at the UN Headquarters. It was my first or second time sitting in on the Board meetings, and Dr. Congress mentioned needing to begin planning for the Fall Conference. The mission of IWG is something I am passionate about, and I naturally get drawn to taking concrete actions, so I almost fell into the role of Chair-ing. In hindsight, there were some things I did not consider regarding planning an event while still amid a Pandemic; however, the evolution of my landing in this role made me feel confident to take it on.

I have planned events in the past. Specifically, I curated a gallery fundraiser event for *Dancers Responding to AIDS*, so the responsibility of planning this event seemingly alone was not intimidating. When we ultimately decided the conference was going to be entirely virtual, although that presented its own problems, all of the other "things" that come with coordinating an in-person event were taken off my shoulders, and in a way - I assumed - it would be easier.

The title for our conference was: *The Ongoing Challenges for all Women and Girls During a Time of Unrest: A Human Rights Perspective*. Although the theme was vast, it provided an open forum for psychologists, teachers, and researchers to discuss the challenges women and girls face, especially during the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and offer gender-neutral interventions. I held a dual role within this conference: Chair and Panelist. I was honored to share my work with the *Gibney Dance Company*, and their *Hands Are For Holding* workshops... I quickly realized how passion invites drive into project implementation and sharing and how a strong team of support facilitates pride in collaborative accomplishment.

Through the trust my team quickly showed and provided me, I felt supported in our attempts to reach our goals. The University assisted our efforts and was extremely helpful, creating a sense of community within a relatively large academic system. Upon reflection, my leadership faltered when I questioned my position as "point person." There were moments I found myself placed in the "Student" role rather than the "Chair" role, which hindered effective planning and development. However, having some UN Cohorts on the Board and my team helped us operate efficiently and allowed space for me to be vulnerable, ask for help, and receive it.

The pipeline of education, advocacy, and action is one I seek within my work as a social worker and advocate for the respect of fundamental human rights. Chairing and being a panelist at this conference taught me that the above trajectory is not always linear; instead, it is cyclical, informed, and interconnected. This experience opened my eyes to the opportunities for expansion within these intersections. While preparing to co-chair a Parallel event for NGO CSW67, I hope to use these reflections as inspiration to lead through a newfound sense of confidence and self-assurance. ▼

GIBNEY
 COMPANY
 COMMUNITY
 CENTER

**HANDS ARE FOR
 HOLDING®**

Promoting Healthy Relationships
 through Dance

<https://gibneydance.org/hands-are-for-holding/>

TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR DR. AZHAR'S ARTICLE ON AN ANALYSIS OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND API STEREOTYPES



Sameena Azhar, PhD

You're So Exotic Looking: Intersectional Analysis of Asian American and Pacific Islander Stereotypes

S: *(Continued from Page 1)* ... Ultimately, these myths serve to homogenize API communities, which are vastly diverse in terms of language, ethnicity, religion, skin color, and culture. The model minority myth also works to minimize the effects of racism against Asian Americans or make their experiences with racism seem less legitimate than those of other racial or ethnic minorities.

Contrary to these model minority myths, Asian Americans have also historically been the subject of racism, xenophobia, and discrimination. Asian Americans are often racialized as “forever foreigners” and assumed to be non-English speakers or non-citizens, regardless of their country of birth, their English proficiency, or the length of time they have spent in the United States. Ultimately, the model minority myth eclipses the consequences of anti-Asian racism by blanketly portraying all API communities in a uniform manner. Additionally, the model minority myth isolates Asian Americans who exist outside of these stereotypes, including queer Asians, creating deep emotional and psychological impacts.

In the past few years, there has been a steep rise in incidents of anti-Asian discrimination and hate, which have been exacerbated by stereotypes regarding Asian Americans being carriers of COVID-19. The novel coronavirus had been pejoratively labeled by the former president as the China Virus and the Kung Flu. Now we have good evidence that this politicized and racist rhetoric contributed to an increase in hate crimes against API communities.

In alignment with conceptualizations offered by critical race theory, we seek to problematize the model minority myth, which reinforces the belief that racism is no longer a problem in the United States and that America is a post-racial, equitable, meritocratic society.

Could you give a before-and-after picture of what you found in regard to the study's larger themes [i.e. race, gender, & sexuality]?

S: We identified six recurring themes regarding the intersecting positionalities of gender and sexuality for APIs: (1) API women are perceived to be exotic and are overtly sexualized, (2) API women are expected to be passive, (3) API men are perceived to be weak and asexual, (4) Both API men and women are the objects of racialized violence and sexual harassment, (5) Queer APIs have unique experiences of sexualized harassment and violence, and (6) APIs are the subjects of neocolonialist attitudes. API women were repeatedly referred to as “China doll” or “Oriental princess” and portrayed as quiet, demure, and controllable. A number of tweets reported on the escalation of Asian fetishization of women into full-scale verbal assaults, sexual harassment, and violence. As much as API women were exoticized and sexualized, API men were emasculated and asexualized. Social constructions of API men as weak or submissive were not only reflected in heterosexual encounters, but also in queer communities as well.

The Asian immigrant—and we would argue, by extension their American-born children—often function as a site upon which the United States projects its anxieties regarding threats to the coherence of the nation state. Taken together, the themes from this collection of tweets presented in this study reiterate that, regardless of their socioeconomic or educational successes, Asian Americans in the United States are nonetheless portrayed in gendered, sexualized, and racialized ways that ultimately operate to uphold white supremacy.

Discuss where we - scholars, activists, laypeople - go from here, and your thoughts on feminist solidarity, intersectionality as a movement strategy, and beyond.

S: Consistent with the social movement underpinnings of intersectional analyses,

we seek our research findings to be part of a larger social activism project to help bring light to sexualized issues affecting racial/ethnic minority communities in the United States.

Through a process of critical reflection, social workers need to be able to confront how we reproduce social oppression through our educational, professional, and research practices. Although sometimes divorced from social activism in academic spaces, intersectionality as a conceptual framework is deeply rooted in campaigns for social justice and is well-suited for social work practice. We believe that at its core, intersectionality is a social movement strategy and recognize that it has been leveraged by socially marginalized groups advocating for social change.

We hope that our research will help social workers recognize the interconnectedness of social justice issues, appreciating that single-axis struggles for issues like feminism, racial equity, or economic justice must be tied to each other in order to be both meaningful and effective in the long term. As practitioners, we further argue that intersectional gender- and race-based movements explicitly seek to politically unify disparate groups, in this case, APIs, who are diverse in composition, but often share common histories of colonization and marginalization. We appreciate that the political dimensions of intersectionality embody a motivation to go beyond comprehension of intersectional dynamics to attempts to transform them. For our work to be truly intersectional, the results of our research project must be tied to broader movements within social activism for communities of color. We see this work to be part of a larger social conversation that challenges social work scholars and practitioners to think beyond the substantive silos by which our work, and indeed our own identities, have been categorized and defined. We seek to challenge artificial divides that exist between the roles of “scholars” and “activists,” seeking instead a working environment that allows for both the study of social problems and the application of these studies in active efforts to address solutions in our everyday lives. As API social workers and educators, we aspire to see social work research engage more fully with minority communities—both racial/ethnic minorities as well as gender/sexual minorities—in meaningful, participatory, and respectful ways. ▼