

# Spring 2020 News Update



Watch the Spring 2020 Virtual Celebration of Excellence Video and read the stories below.

Video edited and produced by Douglas Guitierrez

## Statement from the Dean on COVID-19/Coronavirus

By Valerie Fields Hill

Dear Students, faculty, staff, alumni and supporters,

Recently, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19, or coronavirus, a pandemic, which means sadly that this virus has spread all over the world.

UTA President Vistasp Karbhari announced Spring Break has been extended for one week for in-person classes and the University is moving to offer all face-to face classes online until further notice.

All students should begin checking their Canvas accounts for messages from their professors, Dr. Diane Mitschke, SSW Associate Dean for Academic & Student Affairs, academic program directors and the advising and field offices.

I along with the School of Social Work's faculty and senior leadership will work to mitigate issues and concerns related to this change in instruction mode. We will follow all instructions and guidance from the Office of the President, UTA Information Security Office and outside entities, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state and county health officials regarding COVID-19.

At all times, the health and well-being of our students, staff and faculty is our highest priority. I advise anyone who feels sick or unwell to immediately visit the nearest doctor or medical facility.

For now, all School of Social Work student organization meetings, activities, observances and alumni events that we had scheduled for March and through April 15 are cancelled or postponed until further notice.

See full story here: [Dean's statement on COVID-19](#)



Social Work BSW Student Elizabeth Joy Anderson

## Graduating SSW student lends hand, heart to local families

By Valerie Fields Hill

Last fall, when Social Work senior Elizabeth Joy Anderson learned she had been placed at Arlington Urban Ministries to complete her required internship, she was overjoyed.

It was a perfect fit.

For 19 years, Arlington Urban Ministries, a small nonprofit located in central Arlington, has provided food, rent and utility assistance to the city's most marginalized residents.

Anderson is familiar with such need: Years earlier, her own father and mother relied on assistance to support their young family.

She vowed to make a difference.

"When people come in for a little help, I can recognize that their level of hard work often has little to do with the situation they're in," said Anderson, who grew up in Grand Prairie but now lives in Arlington. "I can treat them like the hardworking people they are and try to upend that sense of haughtiness I felt as a child."

Anderson will graduate with a Bachelor of Social Work degree this month. She is accepted into the School of Social Work's Master's degree program and plans to become a Licensed Master Social Worker.

Anderson is among hundreds of UTA students who have completed internships, mastered their course work and held down full-time jobs - all while pursuing their degrees. Yet, they have no commencement ceremony to attend.

Read the rest of the story: [Graduating SSW Student Lends Hand, Heart to Local Families](#)

## Social distancing does not mean social isolation, says Social Work professors

By Valerie Fields Hill

Noelle Fields and Ling Xu, assistant professors in the School of Social Work at The University of Texas at Arlington, believe that social distancing requirements during the coronavirus pandemic place older adults at higher risks of physical and mental ailments.

The pair specializes in research and education related to older adults and their family caregivers.

"While social distancing may ultimately impact all of us, the negative effect may be greater for older adults who are already at risk for social isolation," Fields said. "Some in gerontology and other social science fields are calling for 'physical distancing' rather than 'social distancing.'

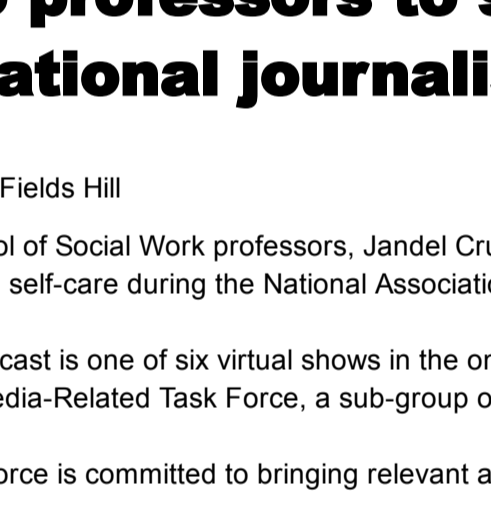
"The thought is that we can all still remain connected to one another socially, using strategies such as phone calls, video conferencing and even 'snail mail.'"

There is strong evidence that for older adults, social isolation and loneliness negatively affect mortality and are associated with higher risks for a variety of physical and mental conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease.

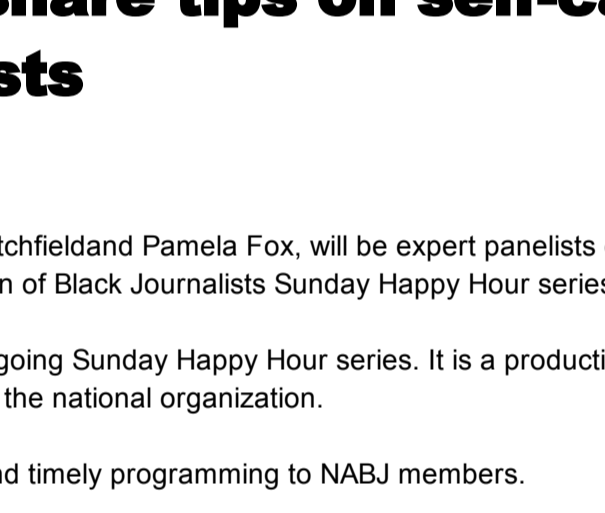
"With the advent of COVID-19, social isolation is now an ever more pressing public health concern," Xu said.

In the following Q&A, Fields and Xu provide a few strategies for minimizing social isolation for older adults and their families.

Read the rest of the story [Social Distancing does not mean Social Isolation](#)



Dr. Jandel Crutchfield  
Assistant Professor



Dr. Pamela Fox  
Assistant Professor of Practice

## Two professors to share tips on self-care to national journalists

By Valerie Fields Hill

Two School of Social Work professors, Jandel Crutchfield and Pamela Fox, will be expert panelists on mental health and self-care during the National Association of Black Journalists Sunday Happy Hour series.

The broadcast is one of six virtual shows in the ongoing Sunday Happy Hour series. It is a production of NABJ's Media-Related Task Force, a sub-group of the national organization.

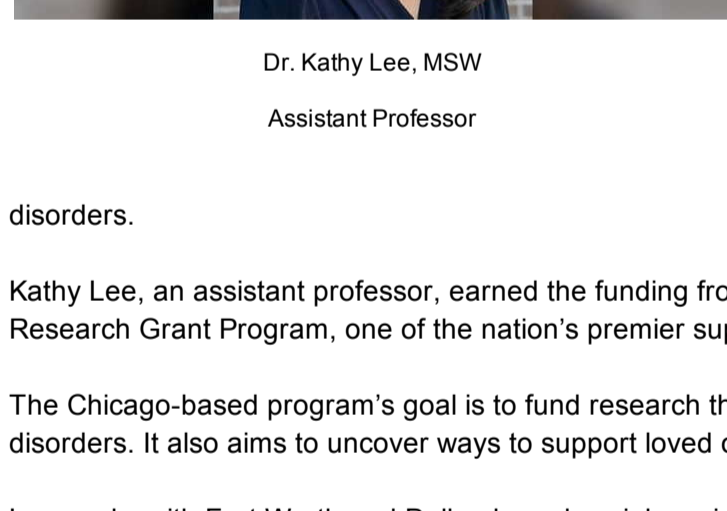
The task force is committed to bringing relevant and timely programming to NABJ members.

The series began earlier this year and will commence in May. Shows in the series are broadcast live each Sunday on the Zoom web conferencing platform.

The two professors will answer questions and offer tools, strategies and tips to African American reporters, broadcasters, producers, advertising executives and other media-related professionals to employ for guarding their mental health as they report news and create messaging during the Coronavirus pandemic. Many of these professionals now are working in a new normal - isolated in their own home studios and practicing social distancing while covering the COVID-19 pandemic.

NABJ President Dorothy Tucker will be a featured guest on the live broadcast. Tucker, a reporter at CBS-2 in Chicago, was diagnosed earlier this year with COVID-19. She since has recovered. She will share her and her family's personal journey.

Read the rest of the story: [Tips on Self-Care to National Journalists](#)



Dr. Kathy Lee, MSW  
Assistant Professor

## Can phone apps help dementia caregivers?

By Valerie Fields Hill

A UTA School of Social Work professor has been awarded a \$150,000 grant to study the best ways to communicate with caregivers of East Asian Americans diagnosed with memory disorders.

Kathy Lee, an assistant professor, earned the funding from the Alzheimer's Association International Research Grant Program, one of the nation's premier supporters of dementia research.

The Chicago-based program's goal is to fund research that identifies new treatments for memory disorders. It also aims to uncover ways to support loved ones who care for Alzheimer's patients.

Lee works with Fort Worth and Dallas-based social service agencies that serve dementia patients. While volunteering at the agencies, she noticed a conspicuous absence of local residents of Chinese and Korean descent.

"Whenever I go there, you don't see many Asians in general," she said recently.

Asian-Americans are the second fastest growing population of older adults in the United States according to Lee's research. By 2050, nearly 10 percent of Americans who are 65 or older will be Asian-American, her research shows.

As this population increases, the numbers of Korean and Chinese Americans diagnosed with dementia disorders are expected to spike.

Therefore, she says, "It is important to develop knowledge and our understanding of East Asian American family caregivers of persons with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias," or ADRD.

Read the rest of the story: [Can Phone Apps Help Dementia Caregivers?](#)

## COVID-19 disproportionately affects African American, Latinx communities

By Dean Scott Ryan

As we grapple with the devastating infection and mortality rates of Coronavirus, there are communities and populations who are disproportionately affected. The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on disparities and economic injustices in our health care system.

According to recent media reports, African Americans are diagnosed with and dying from COVID-19 at higher rates than other racial and ethnic groups.

In an initial advanced study published last month Laurencin and McClinton (2020) state, "Blacks have a higher rate of infection and death in comparison to their population percentage in the state of Connecticut."

For some, this is not new information: Social Workers and other medical professionals have long advocated addressing - and fixing - deficiencies and biases in the country's health care system.

For others, the COVID-19 pandemic has cast an indisputable light on decades of inequities in health care.

Today, it is costing many lives.

One reason is African American and Latinos often lack access to primary health care. They also are more likely to be essential workers and thus unable to work from home. These are increased risk factors for exposure and contracting COVID-19.

Read the rest of the story: [COVID-19 Disproportionately Affects African American and Latinx Communities](#)

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Read the rest of the story: [COVID-19 Disproportionately Affects African American and Latinx Communities](#)

## Dean's statement reflecting on Juneteenth

By Dean Scott Ryan

Juneteenth is a special day of observance and celebration of freedom.

Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day, is the oldest celebration commemorating the ending of slavery in the United States, specifically in the Confederate states.

Juneteenth recognizes June 19, 1865, the date Major General Gordon Granger and his Union soldiers landed in Galveston - two years, six months and 18 days after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation - with news that slavery had ended in those states controlled by the Union.

But, had slavery really ended? Had the freedom bell really rung for human beings brought in chains to North America's shores to be enslaved?

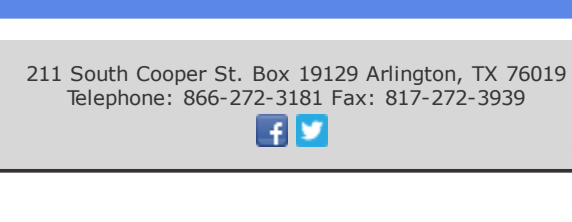
Indeed not.

Much that would follow the Emancipation of slaves in America would include a new bondage - a more modern form of institutional, systemic and legalized chains of oppression.

There would come decades of lynchings across the Southern states, theft of land and property, enactment of Jim Crow laws, discrimination in lending, housing and education, separate but unequal facilities, redlining and, yes, police violence.

Read the full Dean's Statement Reflecting on [Juneteenth](#)

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