



RWVC NEWS

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ABOUT THE CENTER

The Ralph W. Voorhees Center for Civic Engagement at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy seeks to enhance educational opportunities and facilitate innovative research through community based research and discussion. The Center is a collaborative effort of faculty, staff, and students and community development actors. The center conducts community based research and facilitates discussions about urban problems and innovative policy and practice solutions.

The Voorhees Center wishes you a very happy and healthy holiday season and all the best for the New Year!

Welcome

The Voorhees Center is excited to welcome:

Faculty affiliate:

Ronald Quincy, Professor of Professional Practice at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy.

Student affiliates:

Evan Iacobucci, a doctoral candidate, has been leading our Ralph W. Voorhees Public Service Fellows this semester in their work with the Metuchen Edison Assistance League (MEAL) to learn how food pantries are navigating the pandemic.

Wael Kanj, a Master's student in Urban and Regional Planning, has been researching how Middlesex County food pantries have altered their practices during the pandemic.

Aresty Fellows, Tyler Schiroff and Molly Reynolds, have been researching urban change and housing in northern NJ.

RESEARCH CORNER

VOORHEES FELLOWS RESEARCH



Understanding the Impact of Covid-19 on People, Pantries, and Practices in the Emergency Food System

The Ralph W. Voorhees Public Service Fellows worked with the Metuchen Edison Assistance League (MEAL) Coalition to understand how the pandemic affected food pantries in the Metuchen Edison area. Through interviews, observation, focus groups, and background research, the Fellows found that pantries have experienced changes in food aggregation, distribution, communication, and clientele. During the pandemic, pantries have received food from a variety of sources including food banks, restaurants, food distributors, governmental programs, and individuals and groups who donated food, hygiene items, and money. Many pantries expanded their relationship with MCFOODS, the Middlesex County food bank, with some visiting multiple days per week. Some products such as nonperishable food have been difficult to find at times. Many pantries shifted their distribution outside, gave people pre-bagged food and required participants and food pantry staff and volunteers to wear masks and gloves. Some pantries delivered food directly to those who could not travel to a pantry. Many pantries found that participants needed other forms of assistance related to unemployment, utilities and rent. MCFOODS became a critical source of information about food and social service programs with regularly information-rich emails.

CENTER RESEARCH

Associate Collegiate Schools of Planning Conference Presentation

Lauren Nolan presented at this year's Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) Conference, which was held virtually. Her presentation was entitled "Housing Instability in the Inner Ring Suburb" and drew from the Center's work on affordable housing and

neighborhood change. Housing affordability, long recognized as a national problem, has assumed greater urgency in the context of rising housing costs, stagnant and declining wages, the eviction crisis, and, most recently, the Covid-19 pandemic. Using housing data for Orange, NJ, it presents the challenge of housing insecurity through the lens of individual housing market segments. This holistic framework is important, as it illuminates the variegated processes shaping housing instability. Understanding these processes is key to formulating effective policy solutions.

Middlesex County Emergency Food System in a Pandemic

In partnership with MCFOODS, the Middlesex County Food Bank, and MEAL, the Metuchen Edison Assistance League, a coalition of emergency food providers in the two municipalities, Voorhees Center researchers Wael Kanj, Evan Iacobucci, and Nadia Mian, with Kathe Newman and Cara Cuite, sought to better understand how the emergency food system experienced the pandemic in Middlesex County. The partners asked the Voorhees Center to explore how demand and supply changed during the pandemic and to identify the challenges that the system faced and how system participants responded. The researchers found that pathways to food changed, with greater reliance on MCFOODS as a source of sustenance, information and support. MCFOODS experienced a nearly 200% increase in the amount of food they received and distributed in 2020 through mid-November in comparison with 2019, and expanded its operations from two-to-three days to five days a week to support the demand. Methods of communication between pantries and clients altered as pantries reached out via social media, and placed flyers in bags of food. Social distancing measures meant that many pantries reduced volunteer staff, while the amount of work increased as they experienced a high volume of people needing help, and returned to a pre-packed bag model of food distribution. The report discusses how each pantry experienced the pandemic with regards to aggregation and distribution, demand for non-food services, and volunteer experiences. It identifies innovative practices, insurmountable obstacles, and challenges for the near and distant future.

Research Briefs

Nadia Mian completed a set of one-page [research briefs](#) which highlight research report findings about the emergency food system and provide examples about how food pantries address challenges related to pantry management, language and cultural barriers, and retaining volunteers.

INTERSECTIONS

(A Focus on Affiliated Faculty Researchers)

CARA CUIITE, Assistant Extension Specialist

Professor Cara Cuite, along with Stephanie Brescia, Kerri Willson, Dayna Weintraub, Mark Walzer, and La Reina Bates, released a report entitled, “Basic Needs Insecurity Among Rutgers-New Brunswick Students” this fall. The report examines food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness among Rutgers--New Brunswick students. The findings reveal that over 4 in 10 RU-NB students had at least one basic needs insecurity. More specifically, 1 in 3 RU-NB undergraduates reported being food insecure over the last 30 days, 1 in 5 reported being housing insecure in the past year, and 1 in 20 undergraduates reported being homeless in the past year. Solutions to some of these issues include continuing and expanding student services such as the Rutgers Student Food Pantry, and the free student lunch program, as well as the developing a Food and Housing Insecurity Toolkit that will provide practical tools and resources to address basic needs insecurity. Further research will include examining how the COVID-19 pandemic affects basic needs insecurity among students at Rutgers University.

Professor Cuite also has a paper forthcoming in the *Journal of Extension* entitled, “Farm-Based Programming for Food Insecure College Students,” that she has co-written with Stephanie Brescia, L Errickson and A Sawatzky. The paper argues that student food insecurity is a concern at colleges and universities across the country, and Extension professionals can bring unique solutions to this growing problem. At Rutgers-New Brunswick, visitors to the Student Food Pantry receive vouchers for fresh produce to be redeemed at the New Brunswick Community Farmers Market. The Rutgers Gardens Student Farm makes weekly deliveries of fresh produce to the pantry, which is available at no cost to students. With creativity, Extension efforts such as master gardener programs, SNAP-Ed, and family and community health sciences programs can play an important role in alleviating college student food insecurity.

RONALD QUINCY, Professor of Professional Practice

As founding Academic Director for the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Rutgers Civic Leadership Institute, Professor Quincy participated with Rutgers President Holloway, and several other colleagues to conduct a "Virtual Reunion" for the 300 Alumni of the Rutgers Mandela Fellows. Recently, Professor Quincy received recognition by

the U. S. State Department/IREX for his exceptional experiential support of the MWF Program since its founding by former President Barak Obama. His work was chronicled in a Mandela Washington Fellowship "Experience Map" and has been shared by DoS /IREX with all 4,000 MWF's in Sub-Sahara Africa. Professor Quincy has received multiple DoS/IREX competitive travel awards to Sub-Sharan Africa, including 2020-2021.

Professor's Van Horn, Rodgers, and Quincy are planning to launch a research project in 2021, "The American Workplace Divided National Survey."

Professor Quincy teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in planning, and public policy at the Bloustein School. He also teaches a leadership course for the School of Arts & Sciences Honors Program & Rutgers New Brunswick Honors College students. He has a contract to write a textbook for a major publisher related to social change and social justice.

As part of his role as a National Advisory Board Member for the Puerto Rico Public Health Trust, Professor Quincy has worked closely with Rutgers senior leaders to advance access to COVID 19 testing and the sharing of other public health advances for Puerto Rico. He is one of the lead contributors working on the creation of an Island-wide public health community engagement strategy.

In November, Professor Quincy was a speaker and panelist for the 55th Annual Conference of the White House Fellows Association & Foundation. The topic was "Race in America, a Way Forward." The virtual event was attended by over 300 former White House Fellows, the membership including sitting and former members of Congress, governors, corporate CEO's, university presidents, military leaders, and many others.

MI SHIH, Associate Professor

Mi Shih is continuing research on urban land marketization, land value capture, and social housing policy in Taiwan. One of her on-going projects focuses on a state-led land readjustment project and how social housing is used as a means to justify further marketization and speculative use of land resources. She recently received two grants. One is an International Collaborative Research Grant funded by Rutgers Global to support case study-based work in a squatter settlement called Treasure Hill in Taipei City, Taiwan. The other is an Innovations in Education and Teaching Pilot Grant funded by the Office of the Provost at Rutgers. This grant is a collaboration with Dr. Kathe Newman to develop digital case studies to further critical thinking and experiential learning of important land, housing, and planning issues.

ERIC SEYMOUR, Assistant Professor

Professor Seymour recently had a paper published in *Housing Policy Debate*, entitled, "Our Customer Is America': Housing Insecurity and Eviction in Las Vegas, Nevada's Postcrisis Rental Markets." This is part of a broader research project examining housing insecurity following the foreclosure crisis in hard-hit cities. Professor Seymour's research on lead exposure in investor-owned properties in Detroit was also published in *Health & Place*.

RALPH W. VOORHEES PUBLIC SERVICE FELLOWS ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS



Esther Rose-Wilen (2016-2017) works at Gather New Haven, a nonprofit in New Haven, CT, dedicated to promoting health, equity, and justice for people and the environment through urban agriculture, land conservation, and educational programs. Esther coordinates the signature Growing Entrepreneurs program that employs 20 high school students who manage a greenhouse and small farm and pilot their own agriculture-business ventures. She finds it rewarding to apply her education in environmental science and planning to grassroots work in the city where she grew up and to work with amazing young people and community partners.



Tyler Seville (2012-2013) is the executive director of Innovation New Jersey, a statewide coalition of academic institutions, nonprofits, and businesses, with the goal of spurring NJ-based R&D and STEM education. Innovation New Jersey recently completed a comparative analysis of New Jersey and nine other states, measuring their innovation economies, and will be identifying an action for NJ moving forward. The work was done in collaboration with the NJ Policy Research Organization (NJPRO), where he is also a board member. Tyler also is a health policy analyst for the life science company, Novartis, and a board member for the Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board, which aligns regional workforce training with market demands. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Political Science from Rutgers University, and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Pennsylvania.



Julien Rosenbloom (2019-2020) was recently selected as a Schwarzman Scholar, where he will travel to Tsinghua University in Beijing, China, to study for a Masters degree in Global Affairs, with a concentration in Public Policy. Also a Marshall Scholarship Finalist, Julien has been working at Rutgers' Office of Federal Relations on issues related to COVID-19 stimulus, prison education, and access and affordability in higher education. He also recently co-founded the Office of Federal Relations' Rutgers Advocacy Corps, an experiential learning program where Rutgers students meet with Members of Congress to advocate for higher education policy, refine their professional writing skills, and network with distinguished alumni working in public policy. Julien is also Executive Director of Rutgers University Student Assembly's COVID-19 Task Force, which includes overseeing the RUSA Recovery Fund and implementing a Renewable Energy Credit Program to subsidize off-campus renewable energy plans."

WHAT'S NEW?

Ooha Uppalapati selected as Morgan Stanley Community Development Graduate Fellow

Ooha Uppalapati, MCRP student, was selected as a 2020-2021 Morgan Stanley Community Development Graduate Fellow. The Fellowship selects 9 students from across the New York Metropolitan Region's graduate programs and pairs them with high performing community development corporations. Ooha has been working with Chhaya Community Development Corporation in New York City. Chhaya is an organization founded to address the housing and economic needs for low-income South Asian and Indo-Caribbean New Yorkers. Ooha has been doing writing and advocacy work with the organization on their BASE (Basement Apartments Safe for Everyone) campaign.

Kathe Newman at the Collaborative Center and Urban Affairs Association

Kathe Newman is a Faculty Fellow at the Rutgers Collaborative Center. She was also elected to the Governing Board of the Urban Affairs Association.

We have a new website!

Our website has gone through some big changes! Be sure to visit us at www.rvw.rutgers.edu to see our new look!