

Our Community: Member Biographies

Ruth Abaya, MD, MPH

Ruth Abaya MD, MPH is an attending Physician in the emergency department at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and a Practice-based Scholar at CHOP's Center for Violence Prevention. Dr. Abaya is also an associate professor of clinical pediatrics at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and served as program manager for the injury prevention program at the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. She is a fellow of the Stoneleigh foundation and currently serves as senior director for health systems and CVI integration at the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI).

Link to Bio: <https://injury.research.chop.edu/meet-our-team/ruth-abaya>

Nazsa Baker, PhD, MA

Dr. Nazsa Baker, PhD, MA earned her Ph.D. in Urban Systems with a concentration in Urban Health from Rutgers University, School of Nursing. Currently, she is a postdoctoral fellow with the New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center at Rutgers University, School of Public Health. Her research focuses on community violence, with an emphasis on firearm violence survivorship, adverse lifespan health experiences among violently injured Black males and hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs). She also examines the importance of culturally congruent quantitative health disparity screenings/questionnaires for Black populations. Dr. Baker is passionate about bringing the voices to those overlooked to the forefront in her research and she does this by employing qualitative methodologies. She uses qualitative methods to evaluate participant outcomes in hospital-based violence intervention programs. Overall, Dr. Baker is invested in understanding the lives of violently injured Black male who are treated at Level I and II trauma centers.

Link To Bio: <https://www.newswise.com/users/expert/Nazsa-S.-Baker-10051486>

Shani Buggs, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Dr. Shani Buggs is a public health and policy researcher and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of California, Davis. Her expertise includes community-level firearm violence prevention programs and policies, transformative first response strategies, and comprehensive approaches to creating community safety through policies and programs at all levels of government. Dr. Buggs has worked with leaders around the U.S. to help coordinate and advise violence prevention efforts. In her research, she strives to center the experiences of those most impacted by violence to inform policies that foster equity, safety, and well-being for families and communities.

Link To Bio: <https://profiles.ucdavis.edu/shani.buggs>

Franklin N. Cosey-Gay, PhD.

Franklin N. Cosey-Gay, PhD., MPH is the Director of the University of Chicago Medical Center Violence Recovery Program, a hospital-based violence intervention program. His research has focused on developing, implementing, and evaluating school, family-based, community-based, and hospital-based interventions. Before leading the hospital-based intervention, Franklin was the Executive Director of the Chicago Center for Youth Violence Prevention. He also served as the lead qualitative investigator examining the processes through which the Cure Violence intervention related to changes in community-level violence. His work emphasizes emerging Public Health practice beyond looking at risk behaviors but researching upstream by examining root causes of violence to address social inequities tied to class and race. Franklin is skilled in using qualitative methods to access and understand the context connected to what factors increase risk and buffer youth from youth problem behaviors. Franklin is also the co-director of the 1919 Chicago Race Riot Commemoration Project (CRR19)."

Link To Bio: <https://news.uchicago.edu/profile/franklin-cosey-gay>

Sheyla L. Delgado

Sheyla Delgado is an experienced program evaluator focused on understanding the effects of community-level violence reduction efforts. Sheyla has published several reports on her research work and has visited Cure Violence sites in Chicago, New Orleans, Puerto Rico, New York City, and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. She's presented her work at several academic and practitioner conferences nationally and internationally and has participated in many

discussions with policy makers to advise them on strategies to help reduce violence. She is currently the Deputy Director for Analytics at the Research & Evaluation Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (JohnJayREC). Sheyla first developed her passion for criminology research while attending FSU. She headed to NYC for graduate studies at John Jay College, and further built her skills with certifications in GIS and Social Networks Analysis.

Link to Bio: <https://johnjayrec.nyc/category/sheyla-delgado/>

Noni Gaylord-Harden Ph.D., M.S.

Noni Gaylord-Harden is a Professor in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at Texas A&M University and Director of the Youth Rising Lab. Dr. Gaylord-Harden is a clinical psychologist, and over the past two decades, she has conducted research on how traumatic stress impacts mental health in Black youth and families. Her recent work focuses on the impact of community violence exposure and traumatic loss on Black adolescents and families in disinvested, urban communities. She seeks to address disparities in community violence exposure and traumatic loss and minimize the effects of violence exposure by enhancing existing strengths and assets of Black youth, families, and communities. She has published numerous research articles on these topics and has received funding from The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, the American Psychological Association, and the Department of Education for her research efforts.

Link To Bio: <https://liberalarts.tamu.edu/psychology/profile/noni-gaylord-harden/>

Troy Harden, PhD, LCSW.

With over 25 years of experience, Dr. Troy Harden is an esteemed expert in racial equity, community violence, and social trauma interventions. He notably developed and led Northeastern Illinois University's Master of Social Work Program and currently directs the Race and Ethnic Studies Institute at Texas A&M University. Dr. Harden's impactful collaborations include work with Communities Partnering for Peace, the Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance's Community-based Crime Reduction Grant, and Mayor Lori Lightfoot's Public Safety Research Advisory Committee. Additionally, he offers critical insights as a leadership consultant on racial, gender, and poverty issues to various organizations and institutions. His commendable work as the Board President of the Chicago Torture Justice Center is notable. Dr. Harden, a graduate of Loyola University Chicago's Master of Social Work program and DePaul University's School of Education, received an outstanding educator award from Congressman Danny K. Davis in 2017.

Link To Bio: <https://liberalarts.tamu.edu/sociology/profile/troy-d-harden/>

Stephanie Hawkins, PhD

Stephanie Hawkins is the Vice President and founding director of the Transformative Research Unit for Equity (TRUE) at RTI international. She leads a group of researchers and changemakers with a mission to transform traditional research practices and mindsets to reimagine and create systems that advance racial equity and social justice. Dr. Hawkins was professionally trained as a clinical psychologist at Howard University in a program that is grounded in the practice of community-engaged research to serve globally unserved settings. During her 25+ year research career, racial and health equity has been the through line in her research. Dr. Hawkins has used research in service of equity in the United States and abroad with diverse researchers and communities. Her work includes capacity building with researchers, community members, and organizations, leading multi-site national program evaluations, and building evidence in the areas of community and school-based violence prevention, the juvenile legal system, and survivors of violence. Dr. Hawkins employs quantitative and qualitative methods in her research and serves on several research advisory boards. She has published in peer-reviewed journals, presented at national conferences on a wide variety of topics, and provided congressional testimony on the topic of juvenile justice prevention.

Link to Bio: <https://www.rti.org/expert/stephanie-hawkins>

Talib Hudson, PhD

Talib Hudson, PhD is the Founder of The New Hood, a research center at The New School. As a community-based scholar and advocate, Talib is driven to promote public policy for the advancement of metropolitan Black communities. His research interests include community-based violence prevention, federal urban policy, and community development.

Link To Bio: <https://www.thenewhood.org/founder>

Nicole Kravitz-Wirtz, PhD, MPH

Nicole Kravitz-Wirtz, PhD, MPH, is a population health sociologist and an Associate Professor with the Violence Prevention Research Program and the California Firearm Violence Research Center at the University of California, Davis. Her research focuses on the social and policy determinants of health and health equity, with an emphasis on the social ecology of neighborhood safety and the consequences of violence and trauma over the life course and across generations. Dr. Kravitz-Wirtz employs quantitative and qualitative methodologies to generate rigorous, relevant, and actionable research that can contribute to anti-inequity policies and community-based programs that mitigate the unjust burden of poor health and promote safety and optimal well-being for individuals, families, and communities.

Link To Bio: <https://profiles.ucdavis.edu/nicole.kravitz-wirtz>

Nakita Lovelady, PhD, MPH

Nakita Lovelady, PhD, MPH is an Assistant Professor in the College of Public Health, Department of Health Behavior and Health Education at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. Her research is centered on investigating health disparities and community violence prevention, particularly developing and implementing multi-level interventions to improve mental and behavioral health outcomes and reduce gun violence among vulnerable racial-minority populations such as young African American men and their families. This includes linkage interventions that leverage peer support, enhance healthy coping, and improve access to structural/systemic supports in both institutional (i.e. hospitals, jails, and prisons) and non-traditional community settings (i.e. barbershops). She currently leads a hybrid effectiveness implementation pilot that evaluates Arkansas' first Hospital-based Violence Intervention Program and formative research that explores rural adaptation. Dr. Lovelady has an extensive background in community engaged research and believes community is the essence of public health and equity.

Link To Bio: <https://tri.uams.edu/people/nakita-lovelady-phd-mp/>

Robert O Motley Jr, PhD, MSW

Robert O Motley Jr, PhD, MSW is an Assistant Professor and founder of the Racism-based Violence Injury & Prevention Lab at Boston College School of Social Work. His research, publishing, and teaching focus on the intersection of racism, violence, and trauma among marginalized emerging adult populations in the U.S. and associated mental and behavioral health outcomes. He has received funding from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (F31MD012286), Fahs-Beck Fund for Research and Experimentation, and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Evidence for Action to conduct his research.

Link To Bio: https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/ssw/faculty/faculty-directory/robert_o_motley_jr.html

Joseph B. Richardson, Jr., PhD

Dr. Joseph Richardson is the MPower Professor of African-American Studies and Medical Anthropology at the University of Maryland. Dr. Richardson's research centers on gun violence, structural violence, violent firearm injury, mental health, qualitative methods, translational science and interventions for Black boys and young Black men. He is a HAVI Faculty Member and currently serves as the Lead Epidemiologist for the Violence Intervention Program, a hospital-based violence intervention program at the University of Maryland R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center. Through grant funding from Arnold Ventures, Dr. Richardson is leading a longitudinal qualitative research evaluation of CVI street outreach programs in the District of Columbia. He is the Founding Director of the Gun Violence Reduction and Research Initiative (GVRRI) at the University of Maryland. Dr. Richardson is the Co-Chair of the District of Columbia Violence Fatality Review Committee and Producer/Director of the award-winning digital storytelling project *Life After the Gunshot*.

Link To Bio: <https://aasd.umd.edu/facultyprofile/richardson-jr./joseph>

Tanya L. Sharpe, MSW, Ph.D.

Tanya L. Sharpe, MSW, Ph.D. joined the Factor-Inwentash Faculty in July 2018 after serving as an Associate Professor at the University of Maryland, Baltimore School of Social Work for 11 years. Dr. Sharpe is a community-engaged researcher who is passionately committed to the development of culturally responsive approaches and sustainable opportunities allowing Black communities to thrive in the face of homicide. Her research provides scholars and practitioners with a culturally appropriate framework, psychosocial interventions,

best practices, and a tool of measurement designed to assist Black survivors of homicide victims in the management of their grief. Dr. Sharpe is an Associate Professor; Endowed Chair in Social Work in the Global Community; and the founder and director of The Centre for Research & Innovation for Black Survivors of Homicide Victims (The CRIB) at The Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto.

Link To Bio: <https://socialwork.utoronto.ca/profiles/tanya-sharpe/>

Jocelyn R. Smith Lee, PhD

Jocelyn R. Smith Lee, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at UNC Greensboro. She is the Founding Director of [Centering Black Voices](#)—a community-engaged program of research committed to affirming the humanity of Black boys, men, and families through trauma-informed praxis that prevents violence, promotes healing, and advances racial equity. A trained mental health clinician, her scholarship examines the unequal burdens of trauma and grief resulting from the health disparities of police and community violence and their rippling consequences in the lives of Black Americans. Her research has been published in leading journals, covered by national media, and disseminated to Congress. As 1 of 28 Voices for Economic Opportunity Gates Grand Challenge Award Winners and with support from RWJF, she recently launched [In All Ways Human](#), a visual storytelling and narrative change campaign addressing root causes of structural, state, and community violence by disrupting racial dehumanization.

Link To Bio: <https://inallwayshuman.com/dr-jocelyn-r-smith-lee-dr-j/>

Christopher St. Vil, PhD

Dr. St. Vil is a social work researcher that focuses on improving support services for Black males with an emphasis on those living in urban contexts. His research illuminates the disproportionate contextual risks experienced by Black males in the domains of lack of positive role models and the increased likelihood of victimization. He utilizes a combination of frameworks from a variety of disciplines including victimization, historical trauma, natural mentoring and patient centered outcomes research and combines them with perspectives from the masculinity and men's help-seeking behaviors literature. His approach employs a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods in search of strategies to reduce disparities impacting Black males and disrupt cycles of violence that are rooted in broader social inequities within the communities they live.

Link To Bio: <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/faculty-research/full-time-faculty/cstvil.html>

Chico Tillmon, PhD

Chico Tillmon, PhD, is the Director of the Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Leadership Academy at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy. The CVI Leadership Academy will be the first CVI training program designed to elevate the leadership capacity of leaders who oversee community-based organizations, offices of violence prevention, hospital violence intervention, and other components of the CVI ecosystem. Chico joined the Crime Lab after working at Heartland Alliance as the Executive Director of READI National Center for Safer Communities, a national technical assistance provider that provides capacity building and training for cities and communities throughout the United States. Tillmon is also a violence-prevention expert who serves on the leadership team of the Black and Brown Peace Consortium, the collaborative that led the Fund Peace initiative. The former executive director of the YMCA of Metro Chicago's Youth Safety and Violence Prevention programs, he is a leading national consultant and training and technical assistance provider on violence prevention, reentry, and nonprofits.

Link To Bio: <https://counciloncj.org/chico-tillmon/>

Mudia Uzzi, PhD, MSc

Mudia Uzzi, PhD, MSc, is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Mental Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a Health Policy Research Scholar with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. His current research investigates the underlying structural drivers of firearm violence in urban communities. Some of the topic areas Uzzi explores include redlining, racial & economic segregation, subprime mortgage lending, substance use and the built and social environment of neighborhoods. He aspires to develop research, policies and programs that promote safer and healthier urban communities. Dr. Uzzi also has affiliations with the Center for Gun Violence Solutions and Center for Injury Research and Policy at Johns Hopkins University.

Link To Bio: <https://healthpolicyresearch-scholars.org/scholars/mudia-uzzi/>

Cortney VanHook MS, MPH, MSW

Cortney R. VanHook is a dedicated clinical interventionist, specializing in the mental health of young black males in the adolescent and young adult stages. Instead of focusing on the concept of 'risk,' VanHook views these young men as vulnerable, aiming to inspire a more empathetic perspective in relevant scholarship. His main professional pursuits involve the creation and assessment of interventions specifically for young black males. He utilizes community-oriented research, qualitative methodologies, and critical theories in his work. VanHook's inspiration is deeply rooted in his South Side Chicago origins and the experiences of its residents. He views his own background as his greatest strength. His academic journey includes a Psychology degree from Georgia State University, a Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and a Master of Public Health from Mercer University, and a Master of Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh.

Link To Bio: <https://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/people/cortney-r-vanhook>