On the evening of November 18th, a community of activists, professors, students, family and friends gathered on Zoom to celebrate the achievements of Dr. Martha Michieka and Dr. Judy McCook, this year’s recipients of the 19th annual Notable Women of ETSU Award, hosted annually by the Women’s Studies Program. Though this year the circumstances were a little different due to COVID-19, it was even more important for us to host this event to celebrate the work of remarkable women on our campus and to provide an opportunity to exchange ideas, research, new projects that are presented by women faculty.

Guests mingled and chatted with this year’s honorees as a lovely slideshow displaying the history of the award played on screen. Dr. Phyllis Thompson, Director of the Women’s Studies Program, began the evening by welcoming everyone and acknowledging the previous recipients: “They are the embodiment of the kind of equity, inclusion and gender justice that is foundational to the discipline and practice of Women’s Studies and who model what ETSU means when we say ‘people first.’”

Dr. Martha Michieka, who is the Associate Dean for Student Affairs in the College of Arts and Sciences and professor of Linguistics in the Department of Literature and Language, was the first honoree of the night. Her curiosity about language was learned early in her home of Kisi, Kenya, where English was the official language, Kiswahili was the national language, and several Kenyan ethnic languages were spoken regularly in school, church, and her community. Michieka’s fascination with the complexity of language continued when after studying English education at Kenyatta University, she received a teaching appointment at a boys’ day school in Nairobi, the “melting pot of the 42 ethnic languages” of Kenya. She later traveled to the U.S. to take her Ph.D. in English Language and Linguistics at Purdue University where she developed a keen interest in World Englishes and began investigating the social, cultural, political, and anthropological implications of English spreading across the globe. Michieka found herself publishing on the use of English as the language of education in Kenya and raising questions about the intersections of power and language.

Since arriving at ETSU in 2006, Michieka has continued this research. In 2019, she received funding from the NIA and the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program to travel to Kenya and collect spoken data to help preserve the Kisii language and to create partnerships with faculty and students at Kisii University. She has also been awarded funding to aid in diversity and inclusion recruitment efforts on campus and has provided extraordinary guidance for students she mentors, having been recognized by the campus and community alike for her work.

Michieka concluded her talk by expressing her gratitude to her colleagues, her graduate students, the university, and her family for supporting her professionally and personally.

Dr. Judy McCook, Professor in the College of Nursing and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner certified by the International Association of Forensic Nurses, followed by telling her journey which began in Atlanta, Georgia, where she earned her first Nursing degrees (RN and BSN). After earning her MSN in Maternal Infant Nursing at the University of Alabama, she returned to Atlanta and became certified as a high-risk perinatal nurse, a certification she maintained for the next 35 years. She then studied behavioral impacts on female infertility to earn her Ph.D. in Nursing from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. McCook developed an interest in researching infertility and Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome with Dr. Samuel Thatcher, which led to her relocation in Appalachia and eventually taking a position at ETSU in 1997. Since arriving at ETSU McCook has had several opportunities to highlight her passion for interprofessional educational practice and research. She has partnered with colleagues on research investigating infertility stigma and on projects focusing on intervention for pregnant smokers. McCook also has a keen interest in improving the care received by survivors of sexual assault. Most recently, she has been involved with two innovative grant projects: HELP SARA, a grant funded by the U.S. Department of Health Resources and Services Division of Nursing focused on training Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners in rural Appalachia, and another on identifying adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and resilience in college students. McCook serves as a founding trustee for the ETSU/ Ballad Health Strong BRAIN Institute.

McCook closed with words of appreciation for her family and a call for the crowd to remember the importance of resilience: “We can build it. And if we can identify it, we can do something about it.”

As Michieka and McCook fielded questions from the audience about their journeys and accomplishments we were reminded of the power of community and gratitude. Notable Women is an award designated to advance our understanding of women, their work, and their lives. This year’s event accomplished this goal and left attendees feeling energized, empowered, and restored.
Suffrage in Southern Appalachia

Rebecca Proffitt kicked off the fall semester’s Women on Wednesdays series with “Suffrage in Southern Appalachia,” a Reece Museum exhibit that aligned with the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment’s Ratification. As Collections Manager for the Museum, Proffitt gathered artifacts and stories exploring the ways that activists in the region built a movement for cultural change. The exhibit featured a portion of a mural depicting local women who fought for their right to vote, as well as suffrage-inspired clothing, needlework crafts, and home furnishings of the era to demonstrate methods of organizing for suffrage activities. The completed mural by Ellen Elmes is open for viewing in downtown Johnson City.

Braving MY Own Wilderness

Deidra Rogers, Lecturer in the Department of Counseling & Human Services, discussed social injustices, womanhood, parenting, and growing pains in “Braving MY Own Wilderness.” Giving credit to her role with the AmeriCorps VISTA and her grandmother’s sympathy club, Rogers explored her own life experiences and reflected on her story of growth. Themes of vulnerability, courage, and shame from research professor and author Brené Brown were discussed, specifically in regard to the changes that each of us experience throughout our lifetime. In closing, Rogers spoke to the wilderness we are all experiencing in light of COVID-19 and encouraged all to lead with courage and grace in embracing these challenges.

Supporting African American Women Student Leaders

ETSU’s Coordinator for Equity and Inclusion Chassidy Cooper centered this discussion on the experiences of successful African American women in college while calling attention to the theoretical frameworks of Black feminist thought, intersectionality, the capabilities approach, and quality of life. Through the use of her qualitative research, Cooper highlighted the ways that leadership opportunities and individualized involvement have impacted the perceptions and experiences of African American Women college students on predominantly White campuses. Cooper provided suggestions for how to expand representation and connect students to the community through involvement and leadership.

Emotion Socialization: Implications for Youth Psychosocial Adjustment

As Assistant Professor of Psychology and director of the Developmental Psychopathology Lab, Rachel Miller-Slough closed the fall lecture series by discussing her research in emotion socialization. Youth learn to express and regulate their emotions through interactions with parents and friends, so Miller-Slough focused her studies on the factors that affect one’s ability to regulate emotion, as well as the impact this has on an adolescent’s sense of belonging, emotional well-being, and mental health. In addition to these themes, she expanded on the clinical implications of how to best buffer the risk of negative influences on youth emotion and the coaching that can be done to support parental emotional socialization skills.
Dr. Michael Jones
Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Jones earned his MFA in Poetry Composition from Emerson College and his Ph.D. in Literature from the University of Connecticut. He is currently Assistant Professor in Literature and Language. Look for his recently published book, *The Byronic Hero and the Rhetoric of Masculinity in the 19th Century British Novel*, online and in bookstores.

What prompted you to go into Masculinity Studies and teach about it?
"Just for fun, I was reading Robert Louis Stevenson and a lot of spy novels, and I was really interested in this question of 'where did these genres come from' because they don't exist in the Victorian Era. But in the 1880s and 1890s, there are these subgenres—detective fiction, like Sherlock Holmes is a great example. I was just really interested in what's the historical place that this genre comes from. I was interested in how those fantasies had constructed my possibilities, or, on the flip side of that, had bounded me as a sort of potential subject.

You're teaching a course for Women's Studies in Masculinity Studies. How do you build up your course, and what can students expect from that course?
"The course is really going to start with this moment in the 19th Century—the 'male literary renaissance' or the 'romance revival,' and we're going to talk about this fantasy of imperialism, and we're going to put in in the context of capital and the change in competitive dynamics leading to World War I. Then we're going to actually back up and read Jane Eyre and we may look at how female writers are constructing masculinity and masculine possibility. Then we are going to go all the way up into World War I, post-World War I and detective fiction and 'tough guy' masculinity. We want to tell the story of masculine fantasy: where it comes from, how it's connected to history, how it's connected to capitalism and accumulative power and nationalism. But then we also want to tell these cracks in the story that open up different possibilities for men to be men. Real criticism and real scholarship begins with compassion and understanding as opposed to foreclosure and judgment, so it will also be a place for us to understand maybe masculinities that trouble us, masculinities that have, in my case as a young man growing up in the south, that have harried us or hectored us, made our life hard. But also understanding those with compassion because that's a place where communication begins."

What are your interests outside your academic life/ETSU, what do you like to do in your free time?
"I play jazz piano. I have two cats. My wife and I, my partner and I—are a French teacher, I like French, too."

Click HERE for the full interview!

Alison Dyer
Alumni Spotlight

Alison earned her BS in Human Services with a minor in Women's Studies from ETSU. She is currently enrolled in the master's program for Clinical Mental Health Counseling and works as the Graduate Assistant in the Women's Resource Center.

How did your Women's Studies minor impact your work and how does it currently impact you into your Graduate Assistantship position, into your life, into the current program that you are working in counseling?
"I chose the minor because I've always had a drive for social justice and to be an advocate in any way that I can. I really loved studying intersectionality and that has really implemented itself into my life more than I ever thought it would. So I paired those—my major and minor—together because I love the idea of working in non-profit at some point and working with marginalized groups and that's so much of what Women's Studies focuses on. So, all of that led me to clinical mental health counseling and my goal in clinical mental health counseling is to really primarily focus on marginalized groups, specifically the LGBTQ+ community and especially people who are victims of sexual violence and sexual assault."

What would you tell to somebody that's a little bit indecisive about what to minor on and how would you recommend the Women's Studies program to that person?
"I would just suggest to anyone, especially just who's still in their gen. eds and trying to take everything they can to fill those spots, to take the Intro to Women's Studies course. That course is really what sort of drove me to switch my minor and to open my eyes to what Women's Studies had to offer for me. Take that course and go in with an open mind."

Any interests that you have outside of ETSU and outside your GA?
"I spend a lot of time with my pets. I have two cats and a dog, and they run my household for sure. I have also been getting really into yoga lately within the past year or so, trying to go more frequently. I love Dollywood when it's safe to go."

If you could have dinner with somebody—dead or alive—who would it be, and why?
"Ruth Bader Ginsburg. I would have dinner with her just to talk about her experience and her success in the women's rights movement and being that strong female figure we needed in the justice system."

Click HERE for the full interview!
The Women’s Studies Steering Committee is delighted to welcome Dr. Janice Carello (Edinboro University of Pennsylvania) to campus in January. Dr. Carello will facilitate a series of conversations and interactive workshop sessions about creating space for trauma-informed care (TIC) in our classrooms, offices, and college community to foster resilience, create a culture of belonging, and increase retention. We hope you will join us for this important development opportunity. Endorsed by the ETSU/Ballad Health Strong BRAIN Institute and funded by an ETSU Instructional Development Grant, The Institute on Trauma-Informed Strategies for Teaching and Learning will be held virtually on January 10 (4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.) and January 11 (9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.) is free and will be of interest to faculty, graduate teaching assistants, staff, and administrators in higher education. The institute will kick off Sunday afternoon, January 10th, with an informal conversation on expanding the discourse about trauma-informed practice in higher education and beyond. At the day-long institute on Monday, January 11th, participants will discuss the fundamentals of a trauma-informed approach, practice scenarios to better understand core principles, enhance course materials, revise policies, learn strategies to recognize and respond to toxic stress, explore selfcare, and create an action plan. This timely opportunity brings critical insights and fresh perspectives to faculty preparing syllabi and course assignments and administrators writing policy and developing programming for spring semester. The institute will include dedicated time to revise course assignments, adapt attendance and other course policies, and discuss office procedures to promote resilience. In addition to the two-day institute, participants can also expect an invitation to take part in a follow-up event in April to troubleshoot obstacles encountered after putting plans into action and receive feedback on implementation strategies.

For more information about the institute, registration, and the Zoom link, please check out the institute website: www.etsu.edu/traumainformedteaching

If you have news to share, let us know! Email us at womenstudies@etsu.edu

Faculty Scholarship


Thompson, P. and Carello J., co-editors. Lessons from the Pandemic: Trauma-Informed Approaches to College, Crisis, Change. (Under review at Palgrave Macmillan).


Tri-Iota

Fumnanya Aninyei

Fall 2020 Tri-Iota Inductee

Tri-Iota is the Women’s Studies Honor Society, an egalitarian national society of scholars dedicated to the ideals of excellence in Women’s Studies and scholarship.

If you are enrolled in WMST 2010 for the spring semester and would like to become a member, you may participate in activities in anticipation of your induction. The induction ceremony takes place during the fall term. We are currently brainstorming ways to best participate in campus and community events while being safe and socially distant, and we would love for you to join us! If you are interested in participating in Tri-Iota, please contact Tuition Scholar Dellene Watt at womenstudies2@etsu.edu.

If you have news to share, let us know! Email us at womenstudies@etsu.edu

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