Social Justice in Action

From the Director
Heather Dalmage, PhD
We are excited to present our first Mansfield Institute newsletter. We have had so much going on that we have been short on time to reach out and tell you all about it! You can now look for us in your inbox, school newspaper or on social fours throughout the year.

The Mansfield Institute for Social Justice and Transformation (MISTJ T) created in 1999 through a generous gift from the Mansfield Foundation, gives Roosevelt University a unique opportunity to develop an integrated program of curriculum, research, and outreach focused on social justice issues through which students will develop into socially conscious leaders. We create and facilitate scholar activism among our students, faculty and members of our community, through a pedagogy of transformational learning, social justice programming, and action.

Over the past five years the Institute has developed programming, raised awareness, engaged in research, and activism focused on disrupting injustice while building paths to college and hope for young people across the city.

In the university, the Institute works directly with students and faculty through Transformational Learning pedagogies that connect student learning with the community in a way that self-consciously transforms individuals and society. Whether working with fellow students in the dorms, tutoring youth from CPS, working in Peace Rooms in CPS, advocating for youth in the juvenile justice system, and advocating for youth with disabilities, engaged in data collection and analysis that will help to shape academic, institutional and political practices, our Roosevelt University students are developing leadership skills and vision.

The Institute is the in the process of growing. This year we welcomed a new AmeriCorps VISTA, Tim Crawford (RU ’14), and welcomed back Callie Skwiat (SIUE ’13). In addition, we are in the process of hiring a Program Evaluator and will soon begin a search for a Post Doctorate.

The Mansfield Institute remains a place from which cutting edge research, activism
and scholarship are mobilized through engaged students, faculty and community partners toward a more just world. Please reach out to me (or any of the Mansfield staff) to learn more about our programming and ways that we can work together.

Looking back on a Productive Summer

Deepening Our Practice: A Conference on Race, Trauma and Restorative Justice Practitioners:
This interactive national three day conference held at RU in June explored race and trauma. Learning and skill building occurred through dialogue, interactive circles and relationship building.

Enhancing Residence Life
The Resident Assistants and Graduate Hall Coordinators participated in a Restorative Justice circle training with focus of building relationships between residents and helping incoming freshman adapt to college life.

Advocacy Training: Understanding the Needs of Youth with Disabilities
Meghan Burke, PhD and Michelle Phillips, Ex. Dir. Family Resource Center on Disability, joined the Mansfield Institute for a day long advocacy training for volunteers and others working on behalf of youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system.

The Social Justice Summer Institute
The Social Justice Summer Institute, taught by Dr. Heather Dalmage, focused on the School to Prison pipeline. Students visited juvenile court, met with Judge Colleen Sheehan, gained Restorative Justice training and participated in RJ circles in Chicago Public Schools. The students read important works such as, The New Jim Crow (Michelle Alexander) and Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Brown Boys (Victor Rios). The Institute will be offered again in the Summer 2015.

Community Engagement
Through transformational learning the Mansfield Institute has placed thousands of Roosevelt University students in the community. Together we create opportunities for personal and social transformation.
Transformational Learning
The Mansfield Institute is committed to helping faculty incorporate transformational learning into their teaching by partnering with community members who are central to creating social transformation and a more socially just society. Reach out to us to learn more about this innovative model of service learning that presents opportunities for personal and social transformation as students become engaged citizens.

The Embrace Restorative Justice (RJ) in Schools Collaborative
The Embrace RJ Collaborative is uniquely made up of 25+ organizations who have come together to stem violence in schools and communities by advocating for the use of RJ in Chicago Public Schools. The Embrace Collaborative meets monthly at RU in an effort to integrate RJ into CPS in a systematic and effective manner. The most innovative aspect of this work is the creation of an influential relationship that has led to Embrace acting in an advisory capacity to CPS. Here is an article highlighting work of a few organizations that make up the Embrace group.

Restorative Justice in Schools
We are partnering with two elementary schools, Morrill Elementary and Namaste Charter School, to replace punitive measures with Restorative Justice Practices (RJP). Roosevelt University students are trained as peace keepers who take a preventative approach to RJP. In the schools RU students create safe spaces and talking circles so that elementary students have the opportunity to discuss every day difficulties.

Diversion Division of Probation at the Juvenile Court
Youth with disabilities, often times undiagnosed and “invisible,” are one of the most vulnerable populations to be pushed out of schools and into the juvenile/criminal justice system. To combat this school to prison pipeline, Mansfield Institute and our team of Roosevelt University student “advocate liaisons” work with parents, parent advocates and attorney advocates to help children get the educational services they need.

Students and Faculty Becoming Agents of Social Change: TL in the Community

Melissa Sisco
Asst Prof Clinical Psychology
College of Arts and Sciences
PSYC 250 – Youth Violence Intervention & Theory

After working with mentally ill youth in foster care and gang-related youth for the past decade, Professor Sisco saw
emerging patterns of problems in young people. During this same time, Mansfield Institute was encouraging transformational learning and the Provost's office began offering grounds for change social justice courses on topics of the professor's choice. Professor Sisco saw this as an opportunity to address the lack of mentoring for youth. After 8 months of negotiations and preparation Professor Sisco created and now offers PSYC 250 - Youth Violence Intervention and Theory.

The purpose of the course is to connect critical analysis with life experience. The course is held at the children's secured housing facility of Uhlich Children's Advantage Network (UCAN) where each Roosevelt University student is paired with a youth based on shared interests. The youth with whom we are working, have been severely abused and some have developed aggressive coping strategies. Each week in class, RU students discuss a peer-reviewed, academic journal articles regarding youth violence and learn a related skill to circumvent violence, and then RU students meet and engage the youth in a game-structured life lesson and mentorship hour structured through the Bringing Out Unity Through Interactive Transformation (BoutIt) program. The young people at UCAN often participate in the program for several semesters and talk about it with their friends. The staff at UCAN acknowledge the value of the program and the improved behavior of the youth; a UCAN staff member stated "Before you guys, blue Mondays marked the beginning of a work week away from my family, but now, they are red Mondays because of the heart you guys bring." The community has also been an integral part of this program, the tee-shirt company we use provides a 50% discount; our snacks and dinners have been free for the past year; students host battle of the bands for craft material donations; Home Depot will assist in and donate all materials for youth to make a lacquered dream board this year.

Per the academic goals of the class, students have an opportunity to critically discern the difference between efficacy and efficiency based on the challenges of a community agency. In addition students realize how little it takes to create a monumental impact. The youth we work with are not accustomed to consistent one-on-one time nor pleasant goodbyes which they experience with our students. Simply being present does more than many of the students will ever know. Further, these youth wish to attend Roosevelt University and because they are wards of the state, they have a full scholarship to any college which makes this connection valuable. The mentors learn self-acceptance and the urban perspectives of violence in marginalized communities. “That is what this program is about and what Mansfield Institute has allowed” said Professor Sisco. The experience is becoming the topic of dissertations; UCAN is in support of research that may aid in a better understanding of the success in our collaboration.
Community Partner Highlight
The MISJT works with many wonderful and committed community partners. We would like to introduce you to two.

WITS: Working in the Schools
The WITS on Campus program is a one-on-one mentoring program that takes place at Roosevelt University. Once a week after school, WITS buses CPS elementary students to the university, each student is paired with a Roosevelt University student, faculty or administrator for an entire school year. WITS on Campus provides children with valuable one-on-one attention from interested adults, and a glimpse into the world of higher education.

Spark Chicago Mentors
Spark is a mentorship program that brings 7th and 8th grade students from underserved communities to University Campuses across Chicago. This program connects students to their school work in an effort to combat the epidemic of student disengagement and school dropout rates.

Engaged Scholarship
The Institute is involved in a variety of community-based research projects. We work closely with Roosevelt University students and our community partners.

Juvenile Justice Needs Assessment
The Mansfield Institute along with the Adler School of Psychology and the Cook County Juvenile Court was commissioned to conduct research in order to answer the following question, "How can the Juvenile Court improve its ability to help our youth?". Roosevelt University students played an integral part facilitating focus groups with young people and parents affected by the Juvenile Justice System. The full report will be published in December 2014.

Juvenile Probation and Youth with Disabilities
The Mansfield Institute has engaged in two interrelated research projects at the Cook County Juvenile Court. Through qualitative interviews, Dr. Heather Dalmage and Dr. Meghan Burke, with the help of Roosevelt University students, have interviewed and transcribed Probation Officers in the Educational Advocacy unit in order to better understand the role of advocacy in the lives of court-involved children with disabilities. In addition, we have conducted an exhaustive collection of the data from the Youth Assessment Screening Intake (YASI), in order to understand various factors in the lives of court-involved children with disabilities. Dr. Dalmage and Dr. Burke have presented preliminary findings and have a forthcoming publication.
A special thanks to Dr. Megan Bernard and the Honors Program at Roosevelt University for helping to locate and fund the students working on these projects.

**Noteworthy**

- Nancy Michaels, Associate Director of the Mansfield for Social Justice and Transformation, has been invited to sit on the Mayor’s Youth Violence Prevention Community Advisory Board. This board is committed to working closely with community leaders to upgrade Chicago's strategic plan for youth violence prevention. Committees will be putting out recommendations in the near future. She is also a participant of Chicago Collaborative for Supportive School Discipline at CPS.

- The Mansfield Institute has been invited to be part of the steering committee for the Right on Justice Initiative. This Initiative is made up of a select group of organizations chosen to strengthen our collective impact in addressing the criminalization of communities of color and promoting restorative alternative to combat our current punitive systems.

- AmeriCorp VISTA's Callie Skwiat and Tim Crawford represented the Mansfield Institute at a state wide Restorative Justice gathering in Paxton IL in July. Where discussion took place about state wide practices and advocacy around Restorative Justice.

- Dr. Heather Dalmage and Dr. Meghan Burke presented preliminary research findings to the Society for the Study of Social Problems in San Francisco in August and to the Council on Exceptional Children in Philadelphia in April. They currently have an article under review with the journal, Exceptionality through which they explore challenges and strategies of Probation Officers educational advocacy work on behalf of youth with disabilities.

**We are Proud of the Students Currently Working with the Mansfield Institute**

- Larry Dean
- Tressa Greer
- Tonnette Johnson-Alford
- Jamie Mayer
- Anne Pertner
- Latasha Robinson
- Yezeney Salmeron
Have you Heard?
Coming Soon to Roosevelt University
Save the Date April 16, 2015
Prince Ea

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itvnQ2QB4yc&list=UUDgUAAHgsV2fFZQm2fIWBnA

MISJ T Fall Social Justice Film Series:
Please Join us!

Kids for Cash
“Kids For Cash” is a compelling look behind the notorious scandal that rocked the nation when it first came to light in 2009. In the wake of the Columbine shootings, a small town in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania elected a charismatic judge who was determined to keep kids in line. When one parent dared to question this harsh brand of justice, it was revealed that the judge had received millions of dollars in payments from the privately owned juvenile detention centers.
The Homestretch
Please join us for the screening of “The Homestretch”, a film that follows three homeless teens in Chicago as they fight to stay in school, graduate, and build a future. As these ambitious teenagers fight to complete their education while facing the trauma of being abandoned at an early age, they will inspire audiences to rethink stereotypes of homelessness. Panel discussion will include youth featured in the film.

Sponsored by: The Mansfield Institute for Social Justice and Transformation, the Criminal Justice Department at Roosevelt University, and the Juvenile Justice Initiative.

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Mansfield Institute Contacts