Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health

POVERTY, EQUITY & THEIR INFLUENCING FACTORS

9:00 A.M.   OPENING REMARKS

Denise V. Rodgers, MD, FAAFP, *Principal Investigator,*
Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health
Jonathan Holloway, PhD, *President, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey*
Amber Randolph, *Associate Vice President, New Jersey Department,*
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

9:45 A.M.   CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Food Insecurity and Adequate Access

Jackie Bavaro, MPH, *Senior Program Manager, Food Resource Action Center*
Jeanine Cava, MS, *Lead Facilitator, NJ Food Democracy Collaborative*
Rucha Gadre, *Senior Advisor Food Security/Innovation, NJ Economic Development Authority*
Cara L. Cuite, PhD, *Associate Extension Specialist/Associate Professor, Rutgers University*
Moderator: Sara Elnakib, PhD, MPH, RDN, *Department Chair/Associate Professor, Department of Family & Community Health Sciences, Rutgers Cooperative Extension*

What is a Livable Wage? Income Equity Issues

Lorraine Minnite, PhD, MPhil, MA, *Associate Professor, Rutgers University*
Ronsha Dickerson, *Executive Director, Camden Parent & Student Union*
Stephanie Hoopes, PhD, *National Director, United for ALICE*
Mary Celis, MPP, *Chief Executive Officer, United Way of Passaic County*
Moderator: Kevin Callaghan, MS, *Newark Liaison, Council of NJ Grantmakers*

Who is ALICE? (Live in Camden)

Dana Isaac, *Research Assistant, United for ALICE*
Kathy Lopez, *Graduate Assistant, Rutgers University Camden*

10:45 A.M.   BREAK

11:00 A.M.   CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Policy Recommendations and Implications on Social Determinants of Heath

Cara Cuite, PhD, *Associate Extension Specialist/Associate Professor, Rutgers University*
Rafael Pérez-Figueroa, MD, MPH, *Associate Dean, Community Engagement and Public Health Practice, Rutgers School of Public Health*
Nora Hyland, PhD, *Associate Dean, Rutgers Graduate School of Education*
Chester Spell, PhD, *Professor of Management, Rutgers-Camden School of Business*
Moderator: Denise V. Rodgers, MD, FAAFP, *Principal Investigator, REACH*

Using Research and Policy to Address Housing Instability and Homelessness

Luis Ulerio, *Director, Newark Office of Homeless Services*

Jeff Olivet, MA*, Senior Advisor, Initiative on Health and Homelessness, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health*

Vincent Reina, PhD, MBA, *Professor of Urban Economics and Planning, Faculty Director of the Housing Initiative at Penn, University of Pennsylvania*

Jonathan Tew, JD, *Policy Director, New Jersey Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services*

Moderator: Dan Treglia, PhD, *Instructor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, Rutgers Center for State Health Policy*

Who is ALICE? Facilitated Discussion (Live in Camden)

12:00 P.M.	**LUNCH**

1:15 P.M.	**KEYNOTE**

Understanding Poverty and its Contributing Factors

Matthew Desmond, PhD, *Maurice P. During Professor of Sociology, Founder of The Eviction Lab, Princeton University*

Introduction: Prabhas Moghe, PhD, *Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey*

2:45 P.M.	**BOOK DISTRIBUTION AND BREAK**

3:15 P.M.	**CLOSING PANEL**

Who's in the Room – Our Collective Actions Toward Poverty in NJ

Jean-Pierre Brutus, JD, PhD, *Senior Counsel, Economic Justice Program, NJ Institute for Social Justice*

Reverend Dr. Robin Tanner, DMin, *Executive Director of Beacon Hope and Equity Center*

Charlene Walker, *Executive Director, Faith in New Jersey*

Moderator: Davarian L. Baldwin, PhD, *Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of American Studies, Trinity College*

4:15 P.M	**CLOSING REMARKS AND CALL TO ACTION**

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CO-HOST

REACH Employment Collaborative Learning Table

Onna Jones, LAC, NCC, *Assistant Director of Community Partnerships, Hopeworks*

Wendy Melendez, MA, *Vice President of Programs, La Casa De Don Pedro*

John (JP) Miller-Purrenhage, *PhD Candidate, Public Policy and Community Development Program, Rutgers Camden*

John Sarno, Esq.*, Distinguished Executive in Residence, Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation*

Chester Spell, PhD, *Professor of Management, Rutgers Camden School of Business*

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Diane Hagerman, MA, *Executive Director, REACH*

Denise Hien, PhD, ABPP, *Senior Vice Provost for Research, Chancellor's Office, Director of the Center of Alcohol & Substance Use Studies, Helen E. Chaney Endowed Chair in Alcohol Studies & Distinguished Professor in the Graduate School of Applied & Professional Psychology*

Shawna Hudson, PhD, FSBM, *Vice Chancellor of Dissemination and Implementation Science, Director of Community Engagement, New Jersey Alliance for Clinical and Translational Science, Henry Rutgers Chair and Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health*

Henry Turner, PhD, *Vice President for Academic Initiatives, Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Nyeema Watson, PhD, *Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Inclusion, and Civic Engagement*

Housing Collaborative Learning Table

Stephanie Kusi Bamfo, *Graduate Student, School of Social Work*
Richard Cammarieri, *Director, Special Projects New Community Corporation*
Pilar Hogan Closkey, PE, PP, AICP, *Executive Director, Saint Joseph's Carpenter Society*
Stephen Danley, DPhil, *Director of the Center for Urban Research and Education, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Administration, Rutgers Camden*
David Dante Troutt, JD, *Distinguished Professor of Law, Director, Center on Law, Inequality and Metropolitan Equity, Rutgers Newark*

Education Collaborative Learning Table

Ronald Chaluisán Batlle, MEd, MA, *Principal, Bricolage Design Works*
Jonathan Garr, *Chief Program Officer, Camden Education Fund*
Nora E. Hyland, PhD, *Associate Dean, Graduate School of Education*
Dionne Phillips, EdD, *Intervention Specialist, Education in Teacher Leadership*
Michelle S. Redd, RDH, *Education Chairperson, NAACP, New Brunswick Area Branch*

Population Health Collaborative Learning Table

Kristin August, PhD, *Director, Graduate Program in Prevention Sciences, Rutgers Camden*
Anita Karr, MPH, *Research Project Coordinator, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health*
Brian McGovern, MPH, *Chief Executive Officer, North Jersey Community Research Initiative*
Nicole Mendoza, *PhD Candidate, Health Communications*
Mary O'Dowd, MPH, *Executive Director, Health Systems and Population Health Integration, Rutgers Health*
Mariam Merced, MA, *Director, Community Health Promotion, RWJBarnabas Health*
Mary Pelak, MSW, LSW, *Senior Program Manager, Camden Coalition*
Rafael E. Pérez-Figueroa, MD, MPH, *Associate Dean, Community Engagement and Public Health Practice, Rutgers School of Public Health*

Food Access and Security Collaborative Learning Table

Jennifer Apostol, *Director, REPLENISH*
Cara L. Cuite, PhD, *Assistant Extension Specialist, Department of Human Ecology*
Tobias Fox, *Founder and Managing Director, Newark Science and Sustainability Inc.*
Pamela Rothpletz-Puglia, EdD, RDN, *Program Director, School of Health Professions, Rutgers Health*
Daniel Tomé, EdD, MEd, *Director of Community Engagement, Rutgers Camden Office of Civic Engagement*
Jonathan Wetstein, MS, *Sustainable Food Systems Advocate, Pinelands Preservation Alliance*

Dr. Matthew Desmond

   MacArthur "Genius" and Princeton sociologist Matthew Desmond has transformed our understanding of poverty in the US with his instant #1 New York Times bestseller Poverty, by America and the 2017 Pulitzer Prize winner Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City. Praised as "an extraordinary feat of reporting and ethnography" by The Washington Post, Evicted draws on the stories of eight real families living on the edge of eviction to help readers better understand the causes and conditions of deep poverty.

Poverty, by America, has been praised by the New Yorker as "urgent and accessible" and by Esquire as "another paradigm-shifting inquiry into America's dark heart." Drawing on history, research, and original reporting, the book reimagines the debate on poverty, and makes a new and bracing argument about why it persists in America: because the rest of us benefit from it. Desmond is the Maurice P. During Professor of Sociology and the founder and principal investigator of The Eviction Lab (www.evictionlab.org) at Princeton University. Desmond is a New York Times Magazine contributing writer, and his writing has appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, the New Yorker and The Chicago Tribune.

Denise V. Rodgers, MD, FAAFP

Dr. Denise V. Rodgers is the Principal Investigator for Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health. She is also the Vice Chancellor for Interprofessional Programs at Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences, and a Professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at RWJ Medical School. Dr. Rodgers has devoted much of her career to working with and caring for underserved patients and communities. She is currently Chair of the Greater Newark Health Care Coalition Board of Directors.

Jonathan Holloway, PhD

Jonathan Holloway, who was appointed the 21st president of Rutgers in 2020, is an eminent historian specializing in post-emancipation United States history with a focus on social and intellectual history. Dr. Holloway is the author of several books, most recently African American History: A Very Short Introduction, published in 2023. Prior to accepting the presidency of Rutgers, Dr. Holloway was provost of Northwestern University from 2017 to 2020 and a member of the faculty of Yale University from 1999 to 2017. At Yale, he served as Dean of Yale College and the Edmund S. Morgan Professor of African American Studies, History, and American Studies.

Amber Randolph

Amber M. Randolph joined the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) in 2024 as its first associate vice president, New Jersey. Amber's work in RWJF's home state is dedicated to advancing health equity by addressing structural racism as a root cause of inequities. Under Amber's leadership, RWJF's New Jersey department is devoted to advancing comprehensive, equity-promoting policies to ensure everyone has a fair and just opportunity to live their healthiest life possible.

Jackie Bavaro, MPH

Jackie Bavaro, MPH joined Food Research & Action Center in August 2023 and serves as the senior program manager of the New Jersey Food Security Initiative (NJSFI). In this role, she is responsible for facilitating community-centered and collaborative efforts to increase food security and advance health equity in New Jersey through grantmaking, technical assistance, and capacity building activities. Bavaro previously worked with the NJ YMCA State Alliance managing their SNAP-Ed, SNAP Navigator, and other community food programs.

Jeanine Cava, MS

Jeanine Cava has been a dedicated practitioner and advocate for regional and community food systems for 17 years. She has worked across multiple sectors—including healthcare, local farmers' associations, and emergency food services—to expand access to fresh, healthy food. In 2020, Jeanine co-founded the New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative, driven by a deep commitment to strengthening local food supply chains in New Jersey. As executive director, her work is rooted in community-led, grassroots initiatives that aim to re-localize food systems while prioritizing economic and racial equity.

Rucha Gadre

Rucha Gadre serves as the Director of Food Security at the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA). She is deeply committed to fostering healthy, vibrant food systems, understanding that food connects people, culture, health, the environment, and economic development. Throughout her career, Rucha has held leadership roles in both the non-profit and government sectors, where she has designed equitable, scalable initiatives aimed at empowering individuals, businesses, and communities. At NJEDA, Rucha leads programs focused on improving food access and security across New Jersey's most underserved communities.

Cara L. Cuite, PhD

Cara Cuite, PhD serves as an associate extension specialist/ associate professor and the undergraduate program director in the Department of Human Ecology at Rutgers University. She is a health psychologist who studies food security and risk communication. She leads the research program on basic needs insecurities among Rutgers students and works closely with community partners on food security projects across New Jersey. She serves as lead for REACH's Food Access & Security Collaborative Learning Table. Her risk communication research and outreach focus on food safety, genetically engineered foods, and weather-related emergencies.

Sara Elnakib, PhD, MPH, RDN

Sara Elnakib, PhD is associate professor and chair of the Department of Family & Community Health Sciences at Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Her research focuses on the use of policy, systems, and environmental approaches to promote child health equity and environmental stewardship, primarily in school and community settings. Dr. Elnakib has received research funding from the USDA, EPA, NJDEP and Horizon Foundation to study the intersection of nutrition literacy, environmental education, and healthy eating.

Lorraine Minnite, PhD, MPhil, MA

Lorraine C. Minnite, PhD teaches courses on community development, public policy, and voting rights. A political scientist by training, her research is concerned with issues of inequality, social and racial justice, political conflict and institutional change. She is the author and co-author of two books on electoral rules and race and class politics in the U.S., and a recognized national expert on voter fraud and vote suppression. In addition to her expertise in these subjects, Dr. Minnite has experience working with community organizations on survey research projects in which she trains local residents to design and conduct surveys for the benefit of their organizations and communities.

Ronsha Dickerson

Ronsha A. Dickerson is a dynamic community organizer, public speaker, education advocate, and labor and delivery community doula whose work has transformed countless lives. For over two decades, she has served as a Cultural Ambassador and Education Advocate, organizing initiatives that celebrate and empower the youth of Camden, New Jersey. She is a co-founder of the Camden Parent Union, a coalition of parents, caregivers, and community leaders dedicated to securing education equity, fair funding, local governance, and the recruitment and retention of Black and brown teachers in Camden's public schools.

Stephanie Hoopes, PhD

Stephanie Hoopes, PhD, is the National Director of United For ALICE and Chief Research and Impact Officer at United Way of Northern New Jersey. She has a doctorate degree from the London School of Economics and developed the ALICE (Asset, Limited, Income, Constrained, Employed) measures which are now viewed as one of the most accurate measures of financial hardship across the country. The research and partnerships continue to grow and Her research has garnered the attention of local, state, and national media, most recently appearing on Matter of Fact with Soledad O'Brien.

Mary Celis, MPP

Mary Celis, MPP has more than 20 years of experience as a social impact and community investment leader with experience designing innovative programs and investments leading to improved outcomes for low-income communities. She is proud to serve as the CEO of the United Way of Passaic County and lead the strategic vision of the organization. She previously served as the Director of Health Initiatives at the United Way of Passaic County, where she led the health impact department and convened a cross-sector coalition to impact the social determinants of health, supported by United Way's grantmaking program.

Kevin Callaghan, MS

Kevin Callaghan, MS began serving as the Newark Philanthropic Liaison in 2016. In this cabinet-level position, Callaghan works directly with the mayor and his senior cabinet to leverage private and government assets to support the mayor's agenda in areas such as public safety, summer youth employment, workforce development, economic development, health and wellness, education and literacy, immigration, and neighborhood and place-based initiatives.

Dana Isaac

Dana Isaac is a driver of innovation, research, and action to improve life across the country for all, and particularly those who are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed (ALICE). Isaac is responsible for data checking, program, and research support. Through the development of the ALICE measurements, a comprehensive, unbiased picture of financial hardship has emerged, and Isaac is passionate about the use of oral history, digital storytelling, and historical research to gain an understanding of marginalized populations. Isaac holds a B.A. in psychology from Concordia University (Montreal, QC).

Kathy López

Kathleen López is a PhD candidate in Public Affairs and Community Development at Rutgers University-Camden. As a graduate assistant, she worked with the ALICE research team at the United Way of Northern New Jersey. Her research interests center on advancing equity and well-being in communities, with a focus on households with children.

Rafael Pérez-Figueroa, MD, MPH

Dr. Rafael E. Pérez-Figueroa studies the mechanisms through which historically and contemporary under-resourced populations experience health inequities by engaging in theoretically driven research that seeks to disentangle the effects of different social determinants of health. Most of his scholarly work focuses on public health issues related to HIV/AIDS prevention and care, substance use and abuse, harm reduction, mental health, and healthcare utilization. He uses different community-engaged approaches to study these issues, focusing on the interplay between behavioral, social, structural, and environmental factors that influence health systems in which inequities are embedded.

Nora Hyland, PhD

Nora E. Hyland is an Associate Professor, Associate Dean, and Faculty Director of Teacher Education at Rutgers Graduate School of Education (GSE). Dr. Hyland's commitment to equity and social justice in education was sparked during her ten years as an elementary school teacher in Brooklyn, NY. At the GSE, she manages all licensure programs' implementation, assessment, development, and accreditation. She has led several transformative GSE initiatives, including the Urban Social Justice Teacher Education Program, the Community-Engaged Anti-Racist Education Project, and the GSE Community School Partnership Network, through which GSE, local schools, and community-based organizations work together to address pressing issues in education.

Chester Spell, PhD

Chester S. Spell (Ph.D., Georgia Institute of Technology) is a professor of management at Rutgers University School of Business, Camden. Previous positions were at the University of Waikato in New Zealand and Washington State University. His major interests include the relationship between employment, behavioral health and well-being in organizations. Past research has focused on organizational justice as it affects employee mental health, the history and adoption of employee substance abuse programs, and relationships between social connections in work groups and health.

Luis Ulerio

Luis Ulerio was appointed by Mayor Ras J. Baraka to lead the City of Newark's first Office of Homeless Services in early 2022. He oversees the office's programs and activities, and leads the Mayor's initiatives aimed at ending chronic homelessness in Newark. With input from all community stakeholders, Ulerio's office implemented a strategic plan that saw a 57.6% decrease in unsheltered homelessness in 2023. Born and raised in Newark, Ulerio has over 15 years of experience in government and nonprofit leading housing and homeless programs and initiatives.

Jeff Olivet, MA

Jeff Olivet, M.A. is an internationally recognized leader in public health and homelessness policy, with a deep focus on the intersection of housing, healthcare, and racial equity. As executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (from 2022–2024, he led federal efforts to address homelessness as a public health crisis, advocating for policies that integrate healthcare and housing solutions and that prevent homelessness before it starts. Olivet currently serves as a senior advisor to the Initiative on Health and Homelessness at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and a consultant to numerous other organizations.

Vincent Reina, PhD, MBA

Vincent Reina is a professor of urban economics and planning in the City and Regional Planning Department at the University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School of Design with a secondary appointment as professor of real estate at the Wharton School of Business. Reina is the founder and faculty director of the Housing Initiative at Penn, a research lab that works with localities to develop housing plans and design and evaluate housing solutions. Reina's research focuses on urban economics, housing policy, and health. Reina is editor-in-chief of the peer-reviewed journal Housing Policy Debate.

Jonathan Tew, JD

As policy director in NJ DHS' Office of Policy and Innovation, Jonathan Tew, J.D. oversees the 1115 Comprehensive Demonstration, as well as other waivers of federal authority required to run NJ FamilyCare, New Jersey's Medicaid program. He is a lawyer by training and, prior to working at DHS, Tew was a senior program manager at the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers and, prior to that, a legislative director in the Pennsylvania State Senate.

Dan Treglia, PhD

Daniel Treglia, PhD is an instructor at the Rutgers Center for State Health Policy and in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health. Dr. Treglia is a social policy researcher with a focus on housing and income instability and homelessness, with experience in government and nonprofits to connect his research to on-the-ground policy and action. This work has offered a window into related and often intersecting systems, like child welfare, veterans affairs, and health care. Prior to joining the Center, he served as Deputy Director of Research and Evaluation for New York City's Department of Homeless Services and as an Associate Professor of Practice at the University of Pennsylvania.

Prabhas V. Moghe, PhD

Dr. Moghe is Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Chief Academic Officer, and Distinguished Professor at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Executive Vice President Moghe is an internationally recognized leader in higher education who drives strategic growth to strengthen academic excellence at the university, support faculty and student success, and foster global research partnerships. He is an advocate for elevating cross-disciplinary research in the humanities and the arts, information and computing sciences, and environmental, life, and health sciences at Rutgers. He also champions a thriving culture of inclusive excellence within and across Rutgers units.

Jean-Pierre Brutus, JD, PhD

Jean-Pierre Brutus, JD, PhD leads the Institute's reparations advocacy. He was a member of the Reparations Narrative Lab and represented the Institute as a community fellow on the Rutgers-Newark Crafting Democratic Futures project, helping lead community dialogues on reparations. Prior to joining the Institute, Brutus worked at Legal Services NYC, where he represented Bronx tenants facing eviction as part of New York City's right-to-counsel program. He is a graduate of Georgetown University and earned his PhD and JD from Northwestern University.

Reverend Dr. Robin Tanner, D.Min.

Rev. Dr. Robin Tanner is a member of the lead ministry team at Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Summit, NJ, and was formerly lead minister at the Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church in Charlotte, NC. She holds a master of divinity degree from Harvard Divinity School and a doctorate in ministry from the Pacific School of Religion. Tanner is an outspoken activist for religious freedom, racial justice, voting rights, raising the minimum wage, reproductive justice and marriage equality. She was part of a successful North Carolina effort to overturn restrictions on clergy members performing same-sex marriage ceremonies, and helped lead the fight against North Carolina's Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act. .

Charlene Walker

Charlene D. Walker is a New Jersey native and a powerful woman of faith with a consistent record of fiercely advocating for racial, immigrant, economic, and social justice. She challenges leaders and institutions to better unite our social movements and to work towards dismantling systems of hate and oppression. As a firm believer that justice begins at our intersections, she reminds us that Black, Brown, differently abled, youth, and poor communities are empowered by working closely together, to achieve progress on issues that support the families of New Jersey. Walker's unique upbringing allows her to connect with people from all walks of life.

Davarian L. Baldwin, PhD,

Davarian L. Baldwin is an internationally recognized scholar, author, and public advocate. He is Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of American Studies and founding director of the Smart Cities Research Lab at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. His academic and political commitments have focused on global cities and particularly the diverse and marginalized communities that struggle to maintain sustainable lives in urban locales. Baldwin is the award-winning author of several books—most recently, In The Shadow of the Ivory Tower: How Universities Are Plundering Our Cities—and served as consultant and text author for The World of the Harlem Renaissance: A Jigsaw Puzzle (2022).

ABOUT REACH

The Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health is an initiative designed to improve the health and quality of life in three NJ cities by focusing on five key social determinants of health: education, employment, food access/security, housing, and population health. REACH leverages the expertise of community members and the research capabilities of Rutgers University faculty, staff, and students to create our Collaborative Learning Tables (CLTs), which are an essential component of the REACH initiative.

These CLTs support REACH's intentional shift in how Rutgers engages with and serves the state of New Jersey. By fostering meaningful relationships and collaborations, we aim to improve health outcomes through community-based health equity research, education, service, and programming. Members collaborate to share best practices and cultivate inclusive community-academic partnerships.

LEARN MORE

reach.rutgers.edu