

Serving the Underserved Scholarship Awardees: 2019-2020

In the spring of 2017, under the auspices of the Center for Multicultural & Global Mental Health, William James College (WJC) established the ***Serving the Mental Health Needs of the Underserved Scholarships*** to recruit, train and mentor graduate students who are committed to pursuing careers in which they provide culturally informed mental health and/or organizational wellness services to historically underserved communities. In the fall of 2019, WJC welcomed five new awardees—**Jennifer Cotard, Frances Mathieu, Paulina Prieto, Melanie Robinson Findlay, and Rosemitha Theodule**. As CMGMH Fellows, the awardees will actively engage in mentoring, community service, and social-cultural and professional development initiatives at WJC. **The 2019-2020 Fellows and Scholarship Awardees are profiled below.**

JENNIFER COTARD *Counseling Program*



Favorite Quote: “*Every next level of your life will demand a different you.*”
— Unknown

A native of Canton, Massachusetts, Jennifer is the youngest of three siblings and the mother of two boys. She grew up in a loving household where Haitian traditions and strong Christian values were instilled in her by her parents. After graduating high school, Jennifer obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in English at Pine Manor College. For three years, she taught at **City on a Hill Public Charter School** where she worked with children with learning disabilities. Navigating through the Boston Public Schools systems fueled her desire to serve children and families from historically marginalized backgrounds.

Her Caribbean and Latin heritage further enhanced her passion for supporting families who struggle with mental illness. Currently, Jennifer is an **Intensive Care Coordinator at Children’s Services of Roxbury**. She has also worked as a Home-Based Specialist in the Early Head Start Program at the Dimock Center. She is a **Pediatric and Family Advisory Board Member at Boston Medical Center**.

Jennifer has a love for learning and exploring, and is fluent in four languages. During her graduate studies at William James College, she plans to continue to support and advocate on behalf of families affected by mental illness. She will complete an **Area of Emphasis in Couples and Family Therapy** through the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program. One of her long-term goals is to lead an agency that serves immigrant individuals and families who are in need of social-emotional support and clinical services.

FRANCES MATHIEU

Organizational & Leadership Psychology Program

As a first-generation, Haitian-American woman raised in the inner city, Frances has become an ardent advocate for serving marginalized communities with compassion and dignity. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology with minors in Sociology and International Studies from St. John's University. Upon completing her undergraduate studies, she pursued a Master of Social Work degree at Clark Atlanta University where her research focused on depression and acculturation among first-generation Haitian Americans.

Frances is bilingual in English and Haitian Creole. Her areas of expertise are in the fields of substance abuse and Applied Behavior Analysis. She is currently employed as the **Developmental Service Coordinator at the North Suffolk Mental Health Association.**

Frances has worked as a **Drug Addition Counselor** at Health Care Resource Center in Chelsea and as an **Applied Behavior Therapist** at Ubuntu Autism Consultants in Worcester. As the Chief Marketing Officer on the executive board of ***For the Culture Media***, she ensures that the organization meets its primary mission: To inform, inspire, and engage urban millennials through curating content and social events. Frances has volunteered for local, regional and national organizations, including Project Wee Savers, March of Dimes, Relay for Life, Breast Cancer Walk, New YorkCares, and Hosea Feeds The Hungry. She is an active member of Alpha Epsilon Honors Society, Alpha Kappa Mu Honors Society, the African American Social Work Association, and the National Association of Social Workers.

When asked about her favorite hobby or self-care activity, Frances replied, "I love to play basketball and hangout with my family."

During her graduate training at William James College, Frances plans to become actively engaged in professional development activities and seek other learning opportunities such as international immersion experiences. She looks forward to applying the skills and knowledge that she will be acquiring at WJC to her current position as a Developmental Service Coordinator.

Frances also plans to focus her studies on organizational change management within non-profit agencies. She will be joining the concentrations in Leading Non-Profits & NGOs and African & Caribbean Mental Health. Following the completion of her doctoral studies, Frances will work with historically disempowered employees to enhance their awareness of the impacts of culture and mental health on their work performance and productivity.



Favorite Quote: "A ship in a harbor is safe but that's not what ships are built for."
— Anonymous

PAULINA PRIETO

Clinical Psychology Program

Paulina was born and raised in Guayaquil, Ecuador. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Universidad de Especiales Espíritu Santo in Ecuador. In 2017, she moved to the U.S. to pursue her dreams of becoming a Clinical Psychologist.

Paulina's passion for mental health began in high school when she volunteered at a **School for the Deaf** where she created a natural social-recreational environment for primary school aged children to help them transition to a non-special needs school setting. Since then, she has continued to strive to dedicate her life to helping others.

Paulina has **volunteered at the Institute of Neuroscience in Guayaquil** where she administered a music therapy program for patients, and at the **Fundación Cecilia Rivadeneira** where she provided emotional health tools and skills to families as well as organized social-recreational activities for children who were diagnosed with cancer. Some of Paulina's most memorable experiences have been during her time working with people with chronic and severe mental illnesses.

As a recent immigrant to the United States, Paulina has a special commitment to promoting awareness of the links between migration and mental health. She plans to use her knowledge and personal experiences to advocate for individuals who are coping with acculturative stress and other migration-related challenges. Being bilingual has also influenced how Paulina views the impact of language on an individual's psyche and daily functioning.

When asked to reflect on the importance of being awarded the *Serving the Underserved Scholarship*, Paulina remarked,

I never thought that doing something that I enjoy and that gives me such personal reward—i.e., helping others—would lead to this great honor. Honestly, I don't have the proper words to describe the happiness that I feel. All those years of hard work have led to an outcome that I never saw coming. I am grateful and ready to keep working hard, have a positive impact, and make a significant difference in the world."

During her tenure at WJC, Paulina plans to continue volunteering and pursuing activities that will foster her professional growth. She will also join the **Concentration in Latino Mental Health**. One of her long-term goals is to enhance her clinical skills to work with chronically-ill patients in inpatient settings. As she remains open to future opportunities, Paulina dreams of opening a clinic in her native Ecuador.



Favorite Quote: *"Feet, what do I need you for when I have wings to fly?"*

— Frida Kahlo

MELANIE ROBINSON FINDLAY

Clinical Psychology Program

Melanie was born in Bristol, England to Jamaican parents. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Northeastern University and a Master's degree in Social Work from Boston College. She is an alum of the **Graduate Certificate in Executive Coaching Program** at William James College. Melanie's career has been dedicated to creating space for the seemingly unseen and unheard populations with whom she has worked.

She is a **Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker** whose ten-year social work career began with her working in a correctional facility where she served as a Mental Health clinician, the Mental Health Director, and the Director of Social Services. She also worked as a fee-for-service Behavioral Health Clinician at Codman Square Health Center where she provided individual and group therapy. Most recently, she served as a clinical social worker in the **Boston Juvenile Court Clinic**, completing court-ordered evaluations for youth and families.

Melanie was **appointed to the Board of Registration of Social Workers by Governor Baker** and currently serves as the Chair. She is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Social Work at Boston College and Simmons University, and is on the advisory board of the City of Boston's Office of Returning Citizens.

When asked about the importance of being awarded a *Serving the Underserved Scholarship*, Melanie reflected:

"It is humbling to be a recipient of the Serving the Underserved Scholarship. Working with populations that are not valued due to their social location is a privilege many people have robbed themselves of but one that I have had the honor of pursuing. Being recognized for my commitment demonstrates William James College's commitment to not only fostering well rounded practitioners but also to making room for everyone at the table."

Melanie's research interests include psychological and neuropsychological testing. She is interested in exploring how culture affects not just the testing results but the individual experience of both the evaluator and those being evaluated. While at WJC, she plans to remain a champion for individuals and families who are involved in the criminal justice system. Her long-term professional goals involve reforming mental health services in correctional facilities and highlighting the importance of embracing inclusion while truly addressing difference as opposed to just narrowly endorsing the concept of diversity.



Favorite Quote: *"We must wake up knowing we have work to do and go to bed knowing we have done it."*
— Audre Lorde

ROSEMITHA “ROSE” THEODULE

Clinical Psychology Program

Rosemitha (“Rose”) is a second-generation Haitian American who recently earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology, with a minor in Psychology from Florida State University (FSU). Her love for psychology was solidified when she became a **mentee in the honors psychology club, Psi-Chi**. At FSU, she was also a member of the **Minority Association of Premedical Students**.

Rose served as a **student ambassador for the Resilience Project**, a program whose primary aim is to provide support and guidance to students as they transition into college. In her role as an ambassador, she was able to work with students who experienced a range of social-emotional challenges and link them to available resources on campus. Through this rewarding work, she found a sense of meaning and purpose that has influenced her career path.

When asked to reflect on the importance of being selected for a *Serving the Underserved Scholarship*, Rose stated,

“Receiving this scholarship is my first step in paying it forward. I have gone through my fair share of traumatic experiences and will never forget the various individuals and organizations that helped me when I needed it the most. I want to serve as a beacon of hope and reassurance to other people who are coping with mental health issues and to help them see that it is possible to make it to the other side.”

During her tenure at WJC, Rose intends to put her sociological background to good use by actively engaging in volunteering and community service projects. She will seek training opportunities where she can integrate sociological and psychological concepts into a holistic approach that can guide her treatment interventions with clients.

One of her long-term professional goals is to work with women and children in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Rose has a particular interest in teaching women in LMICs about sexual health and mental health in an integrated and culturally-sensitive manner. She hopes to work with these groups in order to empower and embolden them to reach their full potential despite negative attitudes and stereotypes that can often serve to disparage their identities and self-worth.



Favorite Quote: “*You may shoot me with your words, You may cut me with your eyes, You may kill me with your hatefulness, But still, like air, I’ll rise.*”

— Maya Angelou