

Scholarship Awardees: 2020-2021

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 committed to pursuing careers in which they provide culturally informed mental health and/or organizational wellness services to historically underserved communities. The highly competitive scholarship, which covers 2/3 of tuition costs, recognizes the achievements and promise of students who are seeking Master's, Certificate of Advance Graduate Studies or Doctor of Psychology degrees at WJC.

The 2020-2021 scholarship awardees—**Sarah Aronson, Yohana Beraki, Rachel DiBella, Alexandra Jackson, and Kevin Narine**—were selected based on a combination of academic achievements, volunteer and community service to underserved groups, demonstrable commitment to social justice and advocacy, leadership skills, and financial needs. As CMGMH Fellows, the awardees will actively engage in mentoring, community service, social-cultural, and professional development initiatives at WJC. **The five new CMGMH Fellows and Scholarship Awardees are profiled below.**

Sarah Aronson *School Psychology, MA/CAGS*



Favorite Quote: *"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched – they must be felt with the heart."*

— Helen Keller

Sarah Aronson was born and raised in Northfield, MA. She has been figure skating for over 20 years. Her Jewish faith and her family's multi-generational dedication to service through the Girl Scouts set a foundation for her desire to support children and families. Participation in the Girl Scouts led Sarah to find two of her passions—working with children with disabilities and learning Spanish to work with Spanish speaking children in her community. The former inspired her Girl Scout Gold Award project working with the United States Figure Skating to promote the creation of Special Olympics Basic Skills programs in order to increase accessibility. The latter led to her study of Spanish throughout high school and college, including studying abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Sarah received her Bachelor of Arts in Education & Child Study and Spanish as well as a Master of Education of the Deaf from Smith College. Since completing her studies at Smith, Sarah has worked for Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech as a Teacher of the Deaf.

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CMGMH Fellows & Scholarship Awardees (cont.)

In this role, Sarah works with students with hearing loss either in Clarke's school-based program or out in school districts across Eastern and Central Massachusetts. In addition to teaching, Sarah co-presented at the Alexander Graham Bell Convention on how to support students with hearing loss in building their self-advocacy and social relationships with their peers. For four years, Sarah served as the **Buddies Coordinator for Clarke's Boston campus where she organized and led events** for the students to come together to build community through friendships and mentorships. In her graduate studies, Sarah's focus is on supporting the mental health needs of students with hearing loss, Latino students, and students who exist at this intersection. There are few School Psychologists trained in the unique needs of students with hearing loss and their families. Sarah wants to take what she learns in her graduate studies in School Psychology and the Latino Mental Health Program to be a resource for these families and other professionals in the field of deaf education.



Sarah's proudest accomplishment is her input into the growth and expansion of the Clarke Buddies program at the Boston campus. She wrote:

"When I began coordinating the program, there were three meet-ups a year held at our preschool. All of the participants were ages 6-18 and it became increasingly apparent from observation and participant feedback that our space wasn't the most suited to the program. Over the four years I coordinated the program, I fought to get funding for at least one meet-up off campus, and this past year we piloted a version of the program where there were six meet-ups across Metrowest and South Shore to increase accessibility and interest in meet-ups. We also tentatively planned on some after-school North Shore meet-ups with an interested school district. Though our pilot was cut short by COVID-19, I know that Buddies now has the foundation to reach and engage more students and I am excited to volunteer and help continue to support its growth."

During her graduate studies at WJC, Sarah intends to continue her involvement with the Clarke Buddies Program, **serve on Temple Beth Elohim's Mental Health Initiative to increase mental health support within the community, and join the Social Justice Student Coalition** to work with and learn from other WJC students about advocating for social justice from a mental health lens in the communities that we serve.

Sarah hopes to work as a school psychologist, supporting students with hearing loss both directly within schools and as a consultant to schools within the state. She plans to focus on working with programs in the state that offer comprehensive testing evaluations designed specifically for students with hearing loss in order to help schools create an Individualized Education Program that best supports these students. Long-term, Sarah aims to promote the study and research of the unique mental health needs of students with hearing loss. She wrote: *"I especially would like to focus on families of children with hearing loss who have recently immigrated to the United States. There is some research in language development for bilingual students with hearing loss, but more needs to be done in increasing awareness of how to best support these children and their families."*

Yohana Beraki

Clinical Psychology, PsyD

Yohana Beraki is a first-generation Eritrean American who was raised in a culturally rich home in the suburbs of Indianapolis, IN. After earning her bachelor's degree in Psychological Sciences from Purdue University, she moved to Boston to begin her master's degree at Boston University, specializing in children and adolescents. She **interned at the Child Witness to Violence Project at Boston Medical Center (BMC)**, providing Child-Parent Psychotherapy, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy and other evidence-based treatments to children and families who had been exposed to violence. She also volunteered at The SPARK Center, another BMC program, aiding in the administration of cognitive assessments.

For the past two years, Yohana has worked at Judge Baker Children's Center, working closely with Camp Baker, a Summer Treatment Program for children with ADHD and other comorbid disorders. She worked alongside the director to rebrand, relocate and grow the program as well as train and supervise staff, utilize behavior management strategies and oversee daily operations. In her second year of her master's program, Yohana was **awarded the Services for Transitional Age Youth (STAY) Fellowship** under the American Psychological Association for her dedication to adolescents and young adults of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Being raised in an Eritrean family has defined how Yohana moves through the world. She is the first in her family to have been born in the United States and the first to complete a bachelor's degree. Eritrea, a small country in East Africa, was first colonized by Italy and then Ethiopia. It gained its independence in 1991. She was named Yohana, which translates to "victory" or "congratulations". Understanding the sacrifices associated with migrating to the U.S., and coming from an under-resourced and underserved community, inspires Yohana every day to make this opportunity count.



Favorite Quote: *"Try to be a rainbow in someone else's cloud."*

— Maya Angelou

Her research interests include providing high-quality mental health care to underserved communities and creating adaptations to existing evidence-based practices in order to provide culturally sensitive, inclusive treatment. Her master's thesis focused on Culturally Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, with the aim of providing accessible platforms for culturally diverse families to access this treatment.

During her tenure at WJC, Yohana plans to secure a wide range of clinical training opportunities through practicum placements. With regards to her long-term professional goals, Yohana hopes to become a well-rounded, culturally humble practitioner. She would like to be a catalyst for beginning conversations surrounding mental health in immigrant communities, as there are many mental health concerns particularly related to these communities' experiences in the U.S. that go unaddressed due to the stigma associated with mental health and therapy. Yohana aims to eventually open a private practice to be able to

address these disparities in unserved and underserved communities.

Rachel DiBella

Organizational & Leadership Psychology, PsyD

Rachel DiBella is a licensed psychotherapist, gender equity researcher, and national speaker. She currently serves as **Assistant Director of the Title IX and gender equity education program at Harvard University**. She regularly provides social justice consulting, counseling, and coaching to professional organizations through her private practice, WakingMinds.org. Rachel's **clinical practice has focused on trauma recovery, violence prevention and LGBTQ+ populations, and cultivating anti-oppression principles in the organizational context**. Rachel is also on the faculty, part-time, at Boston College School of Social Work.

When asked about the importance of receiving a *Serving the Underserved Scholarship*, Rachel reflected,

"I am humbled and grateful to have been awarded the Scholarship. Although I have been trained as a clinician, I am also aware of the systems that reproduce the vulnerabilities often treated in the 'mental health' context. Throughout my career, I have been eager to accompany organizations, systems and their leaders toward a new understanding of how power often works to reinforce inequity, and how we can make long-lasting systemic change."

Rachel aims to synthesize her interests in group dynamics, the study of power, and anti-oppression principles with her roles in leading programs and organizations. In particular, she is interested in consulting to provide social justice development to organizations in and around the Greater Boston area.



Favorite Quote: *"Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."*

— Howard Thurman

She wrote: *"Although my research and practice have been primarily dedicated to gender diversity, equity and inclusion issues, I know that it is essential for me to understand and acknowledge how my whiteness has affected the organizations and systems in which I participate. Thus, I am committing to self-work, and practices that unrelentingly unveil intersectionality in social justice-related issues, and bringing these practices into the organizations for which I volunteer and work."*

During her time at William James College, Rachel hopes to learn from her fellow students and find a sense of connection, in a community where we are all supported and challenged to give to and receive from one another. Rachel's long-term goal, and dream, is to run a practice and retreat center that services organizations newly committed to liberatory forms of leadership. Although she currently teaches these concepts in the classroom, she is eager to bring theory to practice and shed light on pathways for individuals to reduce institutional harm, and positively influence the industries to which they are connected.

Alexandra Jackson

Clinical Mental Health Counseling, MA

Alexandra Jackson earned her bachelor's degree in Biology with a minor in Education and a concentration in Spanish from Colby College in Maine. At Colby, she researched the prevalence of mental health issues on college campuses and the stigma that often prevents individuals from seeking treatment or admitting to a personal struggle. Her interests include **researching the effects that race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, sexuality and religion have on the prevalence of mental health issues among various populations** and their impact on an individual's diagnosis.



Favorite Quote: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

— Reinhold Niebuhr

For the past five years, Alexandra has been **a teacher in both the United States and Mexico, working in private and public schools**. She has taught AP Biology, 8th-12th grade Spanish, 6th grade Science, and English as a Second Language both online and in-person to individuals ranging from the ages of 3 to 50. Her students come from very diverse backgrounds and she is passionate about ensuring that each student feels cared for, understood and valued as an individual. For two years, she worked in one of the most diverse private schools in Massachusetts and made it a priority to ensure that all students had equal access to resources and had the tools they needed to succeed. She is fluent in Spanish and always tries to find opportunities to use this ability to communicate with and help individuals that need assistance in situations where the majority speaks English.

When asked about an accomplishment of which she is most proud, Alexandra stated,

"I am proud that I have been able to touch the lives of so many of my students. At the end of each school year, my students have written me touching cards saying that not only was I able to help them succeed academically, but also personally. In my life, I strive to help others and to show them that they are capable of doing anything they put their mind to."

During her graduate studies at William James College, Alexandra plans to complete her practicum and internship training at locations where she has access to working with a wide range of age groups and populations. She hopes to learn more about the variety of mental health issues seen within diverse communities in order to prepare for a career where she will be serving individuals of many ages and cultural backgrounds. Long-term, Alexandra would like to work in outpatient settings, specifically focusing on care for adolescents, young and middle-aged adults. She is passionate about working with individuals coping with anxiety, OCD and depression, and hopes to give them skills that will allow them to thrive in their daily lives. Alexandra would like to open her own private practice someday.

Kevin Narine

Clinical Psychology, PsyD

Kevin Narine (*pronouns: he/him/his*) was born in Wakenaam, Guyana, and immigrated to Bronx, New York in 2003. He received his Bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in Gender, Sexuality & Women's Studies from the University of Pennsylvania in 2018. During his undergraduate tenure, he advocated for mental health resources for minority students as **co-chair of Penn Initiative for Minority Mental Health** and spearheaded a charity to support suicide prevention workshops in Guyana.



Favorite Quote: *"When you are kind to others, it not only changes you, it changes the world."*

— Harold Kushner

Kevin also served as a post-baccalaureate research assistant at the Center for the Treatment and Study of Anxiety at the University of Pennsylvania, where he assisted in studies examining suicide risk in people living with HIV, repetitive negative thinking, and mechanisms and treatments for anxiety. Additionally, he served as a project coordinator to disseminate and implement Prolonged Exposure therapy for PTSD in low-income, underserved communities in Philadelphia.

Deeply impassioned to advance culturally responsive advocacy and services for LGBTQ+ individuals in his community, Kevin distributed LGBTQ+ suicide prevention resources for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, assisted clients with identifying affirmative healthcare providers for the Penn Medicine LGBT Program, and served as the web-manager for the **Gender and Sexual Minority Special Interest Group in the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies**. He actively volunteers for an LGBTQ+ helpline to provide equitable access to

resources for LGBTQ+ racial minorities by listening and validating their concerns, providing referrals, and promoting wellness. His research and clinical interests include implementing suicide prevention services and developing affirmative, evidence-based treatments for trauma and anxiety-related disorders in culturally diverse communities.

While at William James College, Kevin plans to provide services to underserved communities, including forming local support groups for LGBTQ+ clients and getting involved in the Guyana Service Learning & Cultural Immersion Program. He will conduct research on marginalized subgroups within the LGBTQ+ community (e.g., racial/ethnic minorities). In addition, he hopes to advocate for the inclusion of cultural considerations in the syllabi of coursework and take part in the nascent LGBTQ+ concentration at WJC. His long-term professional goal is to create and implement effective treatments for anxiety and trauma-related disorders in underserved populations. He aims to someday be an educator in an academic setting who teaches subjects related to these disorders.