



## CMGMH Connection

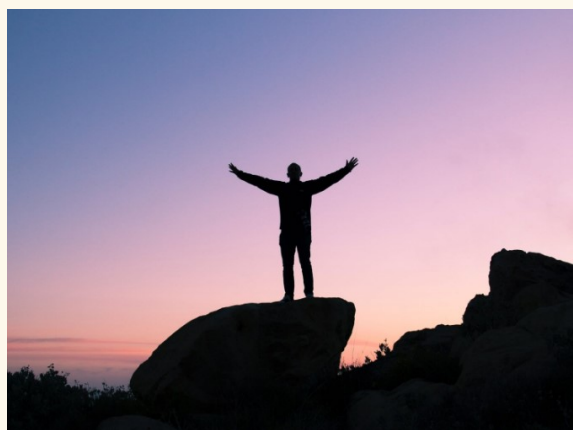
### November/December 2019

### *The Life-Altering Benefits of Practicing Gratitude*

How often do you practice gratitude? During the holiday season, it is customary for many people to express their thanks to family and friends, and to take stock of the numerous things in their lives for which they are grateful. However, if you haven't made a habit of feeling and being thankful on a more regular basis, you may want to pay close attention to the research on the positive impacts of practicing gratitude.

In an article published by Wong & Brown (2017), titled [How Gratitude Changes You and Your Brain](#), the authors described a study where participants in a counseling program who wrote gratitude letters reported significantly better mental health outcomes than those who wrote about their thoughts and feelings on negative experiences. In the field of positive psychology, research has shown that “gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships” ([Harvard Health Publishing](#)).

Having an *attitude of gratitude* has also been linked to positive changes in the molecular structure of the brain ([Khan, 2019](#)) and to fewer signs of heart disease ([National Institute of Health, 2019](#)). As you celebrate this season of festivity and joy, be sure to take the time to engage in the practice of gratitude throughout the year.



#### Simple Steps to Practicing Gratitude:

- Take a moment to think about positive events that happen during the day
- Meditate
- Savor your experiences
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Write a thank-you note
- Thank someone mentally
- Count your blessings

# Global Mental Health Conference

## *Envisioning a Humanitarian Psychology*

The Global Mental Health Conference was held at William James College on Saturday, September 21, 2019. This year's event was a call to action for psychology and global mental health to envision responses to global and local crises ranging from world violence to the spiraling impact of climate change. The presenters included Drs. Marjorie Agosin, Stanley Berman, Jill Bloom, Richard Mollica, Amy Nitza, Nisha Sajnani, and Sebastian Ssempijja. The journalist William Blakemore presented on *The Psychological Aspects of the Global Warming Calamity and the New Science of Evolution that Offers Conceivable Hope*.



## Palestinian Mental Health Without Borders: *Challenging Barriers and Taking Down Walls*



The Palestinian Mental Health Conference was held on Saturday, November 2, 2019 at UMass Boston. The conference generated transnational dialogues on community mental health in Palestine, and took place simultaneously in Gaza City, West Bank, and Boston. The conference explored and reflected on meanings and pathways for creating liberating knowledge and critical community mental health practices in Palestinian contexts. The theme was applicable to the work of psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, community organizers and activists, policymakers, and researchers who are interested in coming together to call into question hegemonic psychological and psychiatric theories and practices. Presenters included Drs. Yasser Abu-Jamei, Yousef Al-Ajarma, Devin G. Atallah, Rita Giacaman, Haneen Haddad, Jodie Kliman, Hana Masud, Othman Mohammad, Hani Murad, Ayman Nijim, and Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian.

# New England Psychological Association Conference

CMGMH students and faculty were well represented at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the New England Psychological Association, which was held on Saturday, November 9, 2019 at Southern New Hampshire University. They co-authored two poster sessions and a symposium about CMGMH's international immersion programs. Among the presenters were **Elana Bayer-Pacht, Emily Crain, Brianna Duval, Kristine Hernandez, Dr. Jodie Kliman, Juliana Rezende, Tia Rivera, Arianna Slotnick, and Patrick Sviokla**. Congratulations to all the presenters!



## Culturally Responsive Therapeutic Interventions for Boys and Men of Color Who Have Experienced Childhood Sexual Trauma



On Saturday, October 19, 2019, the Center for Multicultural & Global Mental Health hosted a day-long workshop that offered four culturally-sensitive treatment approaches for helpers who work with boys and men of color impacted by psychological trauma (e.g., sexual abuse, interpersonal violence, and race-based trauma). The panelists included Martin Pierre, Ph.D., Ulric Johnson, Ph.D., Daniel Callahan, and Damon Chambers. They addressed the effects of sexual abuse and other trauma-related experiences on the psychological functioning of Black youth and men as well as provided therapeutic interventions to support survivors of abuse and help historically marginalized individuals to better understand the impacts of racism and discrimination on their mental health.



# Academy Scholars Presentations

Cheers to **Black Mental Health Graduate Academy Scholars Damon Pryor** and **Adetutu Ajibose**! They received first and third prizes, respectively, for their poster presentations at the *2019 Conference of the Massachusetts Psychological Association*. Damon also delivered a paper presentation at the *Annual Meeting of the New England Psychological Association (NEPA)* and will present at the *2020 Annual American College Counseling Association Conference*. Additionally, we congratulate:

- **Sohenga Depestre** who was a Plenary Panel Presenter at the *18th Conference of International Society for Psychological and Social Approaches to Psychosis*.
- **S. Kwame Dance** who was a Guest Presenter on the *Pebbles and Leroy Podcast*. To listen to the conversation on mental health, stigma, and colorism in communities of color, click [here](#).



## Psychology Today Blog



Congratulations to **Deon Mowatt, MA**, a pioneering Academy Scholar, for his inaugural blog in CMGMH's Black Mental Health Graduate Academy's Psychology Today Blog. Deon is a graduate of WJC's Clinical Mental Health Counseling MA Program. He is dedicated to empowering Black parents through education about mental health issues that impact their children.

Deon's well-written blog, entitled ***Mentoring Black Boys Matters***, spotlights ongoing concerns about the lives of Black boys in America's challenging society (Click here to read more: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/achieving-excellence-through-diversity-in-psychology-and-counseling/201911/mentoring-black-boys>)

[www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/achieving-excellence-through-diversity-in-psychology-and-counseling/201911/mentoring-black-boys](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/achieving-excellence-through-diversity-in-psychology-and-counseling/201911/mentoring-black-boys))

Please check out Deon's informative **Aywyn Ed.** [<https://aywyned.com/>] blog, which he founded to focus on child education and mental health.

## Scholarship Fellows Welcoming Event

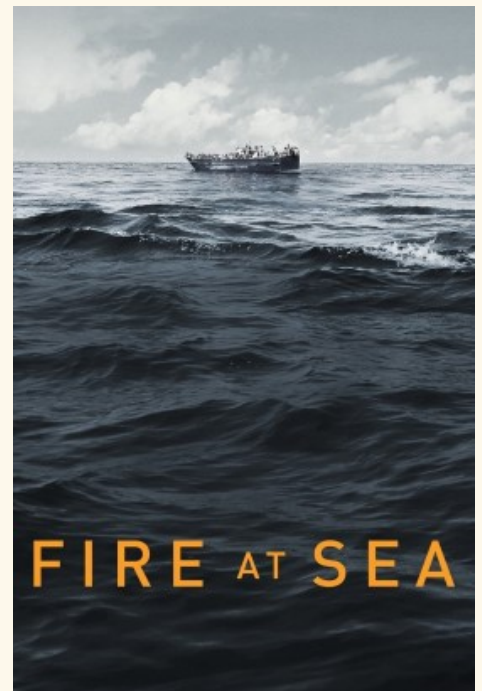
On September 12, 2019, CMGMH hosted a *Welcoming Gathering* for the incoming Scholarship awardees. In attendance were Jennifer Cotard, Paulina Prieto, Melanie Robinson Findlay, and Rosemitha Theodule. Frances Mathieu joined the celebration via Zoom. Other awardees who took part in the gathering include Regina Banks, April Clayton, Michelle Codner, and Christopher Rosales.



## CMGMH Film Series: *Fire at Sea*

On October 21, 2019, Dr. Jill Bloom hosted the first film series event this year: *Fire at Sea*. The 2016 film was shot on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa during the European migrant crisis and sets the migrants' dangerous Mediterranean crossing against a background of the ordinary life of the islanders. The main characters are a 12-year-old boy from a local fishing family and a doctor who treats the migrants on their arrival. A discussion was led by Camilla Modesti who works at the Department of Social and Developmental Psychology at the University of Rome where she is conducting research on refugee resettlement.

In his acceptance speech for the Golden Bear Award, film director Gianfranco Rosi explained that his reason for making the film was to heighten awareness of the migrant situation. He stated, "It's not acceptable that people die crossing the sea to escape from tragedies."





# Annual Cultural Immersion Programs Presentations



The *Annual Service Learning & Cultural Immersion Programs Presentation* took place at William James College on Wednesday, October 30, 2019. Students and faculty provided an overview of the service learning activities that took place in Ecuador, Guyana, and Haiti during the summer of 2019. Additionally, they shared personal narratives and reflections on the transformative impacts of the immersion experience.

## 2019 Kenya Immersion Program



CMGMH concentration students Brianna Duval, Kristine Hernandez, Shelby Ripa, and Lisa Saunders will be traveling to Kenya along with Kenya Immersion Directors Drs. Claire Fialkov and David Haddad in December 2019. Supported by grants from the Children's Safe Drinking Water program (<https://csdw.org/>) and Fairmont/Accor Hotels, students will assist local communities and schools to increase access to safe drinking water, increase menstrual hygiene management education, and develop resources for the empowerment of women in the Maasai community.



# WJC Celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month

*National Hispanic Heritage Month* is celebrated annually from September 15 to October 15. It begins on the anniversary of independence for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, and also celebrates Mexico's Independence Day on September 16.

[Dr. Mari Carmen Bennasar](#), faculty member in the Clinical Psychology Department and Director of the Lucero Latino Mental Health Program, explained in a recent email to the William James College community that the month is “an opportunity to review the way we understand ‘American’ identity.” Adding, “It gives us an opportunity to help build a narrative that accurately reflects the positive role that Latinx have played in U.S. history.”

William James College held a variety of events in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month this year, including a discussion on September 24th about the importance of culturally-sensitive work in the field of psychology, which was accompanied by traditional Dominican cake and Latin music, and a free salsa class on October 2nd. The salsa class was organized by clinical PsyD student Tania Jimenez. Students, faculty and staff gathered for a lesson from *Salsa y Control Dance Studio*.

Jimenez, who was part of a group of students in the Latino Mental Health Program who were involved in planning this year's Hispanic Heritage Month celebrations, explained, “As a previous Latin dance student from New Jersey, I thought it would be a great idea to expose the WJC community to Latin culture with our dance and music. Latin music and dance are a significant aspect of our culture because for me, my family always came together to celebrate special occasions with dance, music, and food.”



In the community email, Dr. Bennasar also provided a number of resources to provide background about Hispanic Heritage Month and information about the U.S. Hispanic population, including [the origins and differences between Hispanic, Latino and Latinx](#); [the diversity with this population](#); and [‘Does Hispanic Heritage Month Need a Rebrand?’](#).



William James College is home to the [Lucero Latino Mental Health Program](#), a college-wide concentration, which is named after the late Dr. Cynthia Lucero, a WJC graduate whose career, in part, was devoted to addressing the needs of Spanish-speaking people. This concentration trains students with the language skills, cultural sensitivity, and clinical competence that will enable them to deliver high-quality care to Latinx populations. Students also participate in a five-week [Ecuador Summer Immersion Program](#) every year that includes living with a host family, a clinical rotation and a variety of social and cultural activities.

# Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

## What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?

The [Mayo Clinic](#) defines seasonal affective disorder (SAD) as “a type of depression that’s related to changes in seasons.” It can affect a person’s ability to function, cause them to feel very low, and take a toll on all aspects of their life from sleep to relationships. “While a less common form of the disorder causes depression during the summer months, SAD usually begins in fall or winter when the days become shorter and remains until the brighter days of spring or early summer” ([HelpGuide, 2019](#)). While the cause of this disorder is not entirely understood, there are some risk factors that research has suggested. SAD affects about 1-2% of the population and research has shown that it’s diagnosed [four times](#) more commonly in women than men. Those who live at least [30 degrees](#) latitude north or south of the equator are at higher risk of experiencing SAD. The good news is that there are [treatments](#) available for those who are experiencing SAD.



### Common Symptoms of SAD

- Depressed mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, and despair
- Appetite and weight changes
- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Having low energy
- A lack of interest in things you used to enjoy
- A reluctance to engage with others and withdrawal from social situations
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling angry, irritable, stressed, or anxious
- Craving carbohydrates

### Treatments for SAD

- Therapy
- Medication
- Light therapy boxes
- Exercise
- Getting more daylight
- Eating the right diet
- Reaching out to family and friends
- Joining a support group
- Volunteering your time
- Practicing self-care
- Journaling

### Resources for Those Experiencing Seasonal Affective Disorder:

- [Light Therapy Treatment and Seasonal Affective Disorder](#)
- Call or Text 24/7 [Samaritans Statewide Helpline](#): (877) 870-4673
- [Depression Groups](#) in Boston, MA
- [Mental Health Apps](#)



# Self-Care Resources



## **American Psychological Association: Self-Care Resource Center**

[Self-Care Resources for Psychologists](#)

[Self-Care for the Scientist](#)

[Self-Care is not Just for Emergencies](#)

[Self-Care for Caregivers: Taking Care of You](#)

## **BuzzFeed**

[17 Poems To Read When The World Is Too Much](#)

## **ColorLines**

[Self Care for People of Color After Psychological Trauma](#)

[Everything is Awful and I'm Not Okay: Questions to Ask Before Giving Up](#)

## **Psychology Today**

[6 Tips for Holiday Self Care](#)

## **PsychCentral**

[The Importance of Self Care During the Holidays](#)

## Local Programs Offering Free Self-Care

Bodhi Meditation of Greater Boston: [Free Individual Energy Healing Session](#) and several [free workshops](#)

[Free Nutrition Workshops](#) with Good Witch Kitchen

Mindful Boston: [Free Community Meditation Nights](#)



# Mental Health in the News



## Evidence doesn't support claim linking mental illness, mass shooters

The evidence suggests mass shootings perpetrated by individuals with mental illness account for less than one percent of gun-related homicides. But you wouldn't know it from President Donald Trump's comments after a pair of mass shootings during the first weekend in August killed more than 30 people in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio.

## CDC: Childhood Trauma Is A Public Health Issue And We Can Do More To Prevent It

Childhood trauma causes serious health repercussions throughout life and is a public health issue that calls for concerted prevention efforts. That's the takeaway of a report published Tuesday from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

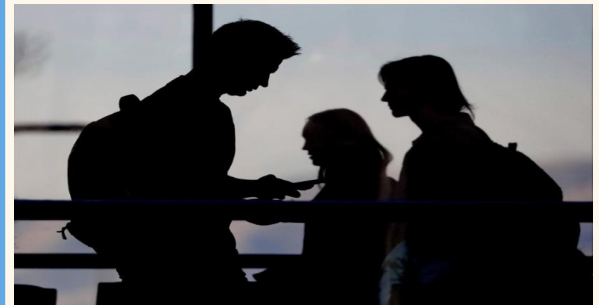


## When the Wrongly Convicted Plead Guilty for Freedom

Elvis Brooks spent forty-two years in a Louisiana prison — nearly two-thirds of his life — for a murder he always insisted he did not commit. Arrested in 1977 at the age of nineteen, Brooks was charged with robbery and murder. No physical evidence connected him to the crime. At trial, three white witnesses identified Brooks, an African American, as one of the armed robbers. Brooks presented twelve alibi witnesses who swore under oath that Brooks was elsewhere at the time of the offense.

## More College Students Look for Mental Health Help on Campus

On some campuses, the number of students seeking treatment has nearly doubled over the last five years while overall enrollment has remained relatively flat. The increase has been tied to reduced stigma around mental health, along with rising rates of depression and other disorders. Universities have expanded their mental health clinics, but the growth is often slow, and demand keeps surging.



**The  
Boston  
Globe**

## Statewide initiative launched to prevent suicides among people of color

A new statewide initiative seeks to reduce suicides among people of color by expanding outreach, providing more culturally relevant resources, and initiating potentially uncomfortable conversations about race, privilege, and how they affect access to mental health services.

## Teen suicides are increasing at an alarming pace, outstripping all other age groups, a new report says

Suicide death rates among teenagers and young adults have increased at an alarming pace in the past decade, according to a new government report. While suicide has steadily become more common across the population, the increase among youths has outpaced all other age groups.



# Holidays and Observances

## November & December

- November 6: [International Stress Awareness Day](#)
- November 11: **Veterans Day**
- November 11-15: [School Psychology Awareness Week](#)
- November 13-19: [Transgender Awareness Week](#)
- November 16: [International Survivors of Suicide Day](#)
- November 16: [International Day for Tolerance](#)
- November 20: [Transgender Day of Remembrance](#)
- November 20: [World Children's Day](#)
- November 28: **Thanksgiving Day**

- December 1: **Advent begins**
- December 1: [World AIDS Day](#)
- December 3: [International Day of Persons With Disabilities](#)
- December 5: [International Volunteer Day](#)
- December 18: [International Migrants Day](#)
- December 21: **Winter Solstice**
- December 22-30: **Hanukkah**
- December 25: **Christmas**
- December 26-January 1: **Kwanza**
- December 31: **New Year's Eve**

## Community Events, Conferences & Workshops

- ♦ December 9, 2019: [Suicide Bereavement Clinician Training](#), The Plymouth Church in Framingham, Framingham, MA
- ♦ December 10, 2019: [Jennifer Bryan's workshop, Navigate Gender and Sexuality Diversity Pre-K - 12th Grade Frameworks](#), Tenacre Country Day School, Wellesley, MA
- ♦ December 11, 2019: [Getting to the Point: The Next Frontier of Public Health in Massachusetts](#), Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate, Boston, MA
- ♦ December 13, 2019: [Workshop: Not being at the effect of your family during the holidays](#), 44 Gloucester St on the 4th Floor, Boston, MA
- ♦ December 16, 2019: [Refugee Crisis in Tijuana](#), Hebrew College, Newton Centre, MA
- ♦ December 20, 2019: [Mental Health While Black, Pt. 1](#), Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, Boston, MA
- ♦ January 14, 2020: [Toward a Better Future for Children Exposed to Domestic Violence](#), Cambridge Public Library, Cambridge, MA
- ♦ February 10, 2020: [Mental Health in Communities of Color](#), Waltham High School, Waltham, MA