



# CHBS Canopy

## Inclusive Excellence

Volume 2 | Issue 8 – January 16, 2024

### **Paralympic Skill Lab: Working Toward Inclusion Through Activity and Interaction** Lori Gano-Overway, PhD & Cathy McKay, EdD

Three celebrated Paralympic athletes (Marybai Huking, Trevon Jenifer, and Nicky Nieves), as well as three accomplished wheelchair basketball players (Brandon Rush, Jacob Tyree and Tom Vandever), were on campus on November 30th, 2023 to lead Paralympic Skill Lab (PSL) experiences. New this year, PSL partnered with Dr. Lori Gano-Overway so students in the Coaching Education minor could take part in a coaching focused workshop. PSL combines Paralympic ideals and values (e.g., respect, acceptance of individual differences, sport as a human right, and empowerment) with educational activities to promote engagement and education related to adaptive sport, inclusion, and sociocultural norms. Kinesiology Professor Dr. Cathy McKay organized the experience, which was funded by the Kinesiology Department and the Hellison Interdisciplinary Grant from the National Association for Kinesiology in Higher Education.



**Picture: Represents JMU coaching education students, coaching minors from JMU and Bridgewater College, with coaching master's students from Randolph College.**

In its eighth year at JMU, PSL is based on the premise that when purposeful and meaningful interactions occur during the pursuit of a common collaborative goal of learning from and playing with elite adapted sport athletes, there are opportunities for participants to experience shifts in attitudes and perceptions towards individuals with disability. The PSL is organized to have the adaptive sport athletes coach students in some basic fundamentals of their sports (i.e., sitting volleyball, goalball, and wheelchair basketball), participate in the sport with the students, engage students in meaningful interactions and conversation, and encourage students to consider how they could work toward inclusion and integration in their future practice. The program thus meets the four components of Allport's contact theory (1954) of having equal status, cooperative goals, personal interactions, and support from authority in a structured and positive experience.

There are multiple empirical research manuscripts that support PSL as an evidence-based intervention where participants report the meaning and impact of the program as well as positive attitude change toward inclusive practices and disability. To learn more about the program and contact theory see this [overview](#) authored by Dr. McKay.

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## Life in the State of Poverty Simulation

For over 20 years, during each semester, students from different majors and programs come together to participate in the Life in the State of Poverty Simulation, in which students live into the experiences of a family with economic challenges as they try to meet their family's basic needs in a month. This is one of the IPE/IDE experiences coordinated by the team at IIHHS. The simulation occurs across three days with different configurations of students. Faculty, staff, and some community members serve as service providers, learning their roles like "Big Dave," the pawn shop owner, or the local Friendly City Utilities. If you are interested in learning more, volunteering, or having your students participate in future sessions, contact Dr. Vesna Hart ([hartvx@jmu.edu](mailto:hartvx@jmu.edu)), Associate Director for the Institute for Innovation in Health and Human Services. Volunteers are always needed and welcomed.

*Pictures: Represent students from different programs; faculty, student interns, & community members engaged as community service providers.*



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**Martin Luther King, Jr. Observance was January 15<sup>th</sup>. He said –**

***"I was a drum major for justice, peace, and righteousness."***

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## The Beloved Community

Within our CHBS Inclusive Excellence efforts units have intentionally worked to foster a sense of belonging for students, faculty, and staff members as a best practice strategy for inclusion. As the fall semester ended, many were exhausted and weary from the actions of hate on campus, feeling unsafe or unheard when trying to discuss concerns, and witnessing the continuing multiple global wars in which the innocent are victims. Many have not had the words to talk about these issues or risk the vulnerability to explore what any of this means for us individually or for our students. We carried this into the break, and we may be back in our workspaces feeling some of these same emotions. Be sure to engage in self-care.

January is a perfect time to reflect on “the beloved community” promoted in speeches by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., for whom the national observance of his January 15<sup>th</sup> birthday occurs annually. Dr. King did not develop this concept of the beloved community. Rather, in the early 1900s, American historian philosopher Josiah Royce wrote about an ideal “beloved community”, seeking to understand his place in the larger community context as he founded the [Fellowship of Reconciliation](#), which Dr. King later joined.

Dr. King popularized and gave deeper meaning to the beloved community idea by capturing the goodwill of people from all over the world. He expressed this as an achievable goal that could be attained by a critical mass of people committed to nonviolence.

*Dr. King’s Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict.*



*Dr. King’s Beloved Community was not devoid of interpersonal, group or international conflict. Instead he recognized that conflict was an inevitable part of human experience. But he believed that conflicts could be resolved peacefully and adversaries could be reconciled through a mutual, determined commitment to nonviolence. No conflict, he believed, need erupt in violence. And all conflicts in The Beloved Community should end with reconciliation of adversaries cooperating together in a spirit of friendship and goodwill.*

[The King Center](#)

Dr. King had focused on the teachings of Mohandas K. Gandhi and how he worked to befriend his adversaries. “Dr. King believed that the age-old tradition of hating one’s opponents was not only immoral, but bad strategy which perpetuated the cycle of revenge and retaliation.” He stated the aftermath of violence is emptiness and bitterness. While Dr. King’s nonviolence perspective was rooted in his faith perspective of (agape) love, others like bell hooks have also written about the beloved community as a concept that comes out of the process and struggles for liberation infused with love. She said,

*Martin Luther King was my teacher for understanding the importance of beloved community. He had a profound awareness that the people involved in oppressive institutions will not change from the logics and practices of domination without engagement with those who are striving for a better way...The truth is that you cannot build community without conflict. The issue is not to be without conflict, but to be able to*

*resolve conflict, and the commitment to community is what gives us the inspiration to come up with ways to resolve conflict...If we think about living in a small community, one thing is that we are very aware of our differences. It is very obvious that, in order to live in harmony, we have to come to terms with those differences. And some are more difficult than others.*

As we think about building college communities in which students, faculty, and staff may strive to flourish, we must find ways to talk, engage, and work to understand our differences because these are not going away. The world is becoming more diverse, not less diverse. While some will strive to maintain an assumption of homogeneity, we have never only represented one identity. Individuals choose for many reasons, often safety, not to express variations of identity, experiences, or perspectives.

Given all that is happening in the world and all the harm people feel from individuals or institutions, how do we build better academic communities in which a sense of belonging exists? Here are some suggestions:

- **Admit** you don't know everything and that your perspectives are yours rather than linked to a large overarching reality. This suggests a level of vulnerability is necessary. Academicians value their learning and research using this to validate knowledge. However, there are a lot of epistemological perspectives in the world based on variations in ontology. Another person's reality may not be yours, but that doesn't make it any less real and valuable. As much as we like to claim knowledge, there is no way we can know the lived experiences of all people or their context of living.
- **Learn and practice** listening with an open heart and mind. When you are open to hearing different people's truths it helps you reflect on your truths. Listen with curiosity. Learn to ask clarifying questions rather than defaulting to your perspective as central and projecting it. That stops conversations. Be gentle with yourself and others as you explore realities. Often, people cannot speak for group identity realities; they can only speak for their reality. "I" statements can positively facilitate a difficult conversation. Sometimes making connections is a slow process as we try to develop trust with each other.
- **Do your own work.** There are plenty of great books or articles from which to learn, and the Internet is always available. Seek out reliable information before you "post", "retweet", or before you try to engage your curiosities about differences *on* another person. Don't ask people to inform you of their personal experiences as a diverse person and then question the validity of what was shared. Do have more than one conversation with a person to build that relationship if desired.
- **Anticipate conflict.** Even the most skilled of us may read situations imprecisely, speak before we have listened, prejudge a situation or a person, or participate in premature problem-solving when we have failed to understand the problem from the person's perspective. Conflict may make you uncomfortable, but conflict in itself is not bad. It's okay to be uncomfortable with conflict. The more you engage conflict positively, the more you can grow into comfort during difficult conversations or experiences. There is no perfection, and all of us will be uncomfortable at times. Here the skills are to slow down and breathe; listen more intently.

Developing a sense of belonging for students, staff, and faculty requires intentionality and hard work at the institutional/structural and personal levels. Be prepared to struggle with each other, to invest in the conversation. You may walk away but don't give up on each other. We can be part of building beloved communities across the college if we desire, promote care for all, and do necessary personal work. "All are welcome in my backyard" is more than a sign people put in their yards. It is a way of making space and welcoming conversations.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS!

### **JMU 2024 MLK Celebration Week NAACP Faculty, Staff & Student Breakfast** *Sponsored by CMSS*

Tuesday, January 16, 2024  
8:00 AM - 10:00 AM  
The Union, Warren 256

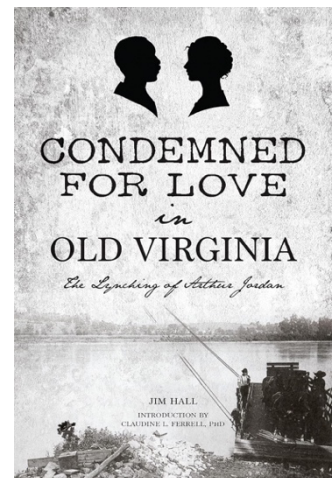
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### **Book Talk: "Condemned for Love in Old Virginia"**

Jim Hall, retired journalist and instructor, University of Mary Washington  
*Sponsored by JMU Libraries and JMU Justice Studies*

**January 25 at 3:00 PM**  
**Rose Library, Room 3313**  
No RSVP or registration

"Condemned for Love in Old Virginia" tells the story of Arthur Jordan and Elvira Corder and how their relationship ended tragically. He was black, she was white, and this was Virginia in 1880. When Elvira became pregnant, the couple fled Fauquier County to live in Maryland. But her father found them and recruited neighbors to help kidnap them. Four nights later, a mob dragged Arthur from the county jail in Warrenton and lynched him. Elvira, taken to a hotel in Williamsport, Maryland, was never heard from again. Stories of lynching are all too common in the postbellum South, but this one tells a unique tale of a couple who were willing to sacrifice everything to be together--and did.



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### **The Bayou Kitchen**

Open to students, faculty, & staff  
*Sponsored by CMSS*

Thursday, February 1, 2024  
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM  
Success Center 1075

### **ROOTs of Black History Month**

Open to students, faculty, & staff  
Sponsored by Omega Psi Phi

Thursday, February 1, 2024  
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM  
The Union, Taylor 302

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**Riva Lehrer, Speaker**

Inclusive Community Series with

Sponsored by The Office of Academic Affairs/Vice Provost for Strategic Initiatives & Global Affairs

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Wilson Hall Auditorium

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14<sup>th</sup> Annual Interdisciplinary Conference

**Conference Theme: Reckoning**

African American & Diaspora Studies (AAAD)

February 7-10, 2024

For more information: [Conference Website](#)

**Lorgia García Peña, Keynote Speaker**

Princeton University

Friday, February 9, 2024

4:30 – 6:00 PM

Dr. Peña is a scholar, activities, professor, and author (*Community as Rebellion: A Syllabus for Surviving Academia as a Women of Color*, *Translating Blackness: Latinx Colonialities in Global Perspectives*, & *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Achieves of Contradiction*)



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**College of Health and Behavioral Studies**  
***Viewpoints on Health***

**February 29, 2024**

4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Wilson Auditorium

**Dallas Michelle Ducar**

MSN, RN,D APRN, PMHNP-BC, CNL, FAAN



***"Gender-Affirming Healthcare as a Model of Person-Centered, Value-Based Care"***

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