

2020 Diversity Week Summit Presenter Biographies

Helen Archontou, MSW, LSW and Jessica Monaco-Copell, MSW, – *How to Be an Anti-Racist Activist*

As Chief Executive Officer since 2011, Helen Archontou is focused on guiding YWCA Northern New Jersey into its next century of living its mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and strengthen communities. Helen has overseen the development of a continuum of programs to support women and families in every stage of life as well as to raise awareness and take action to end racial and social injustice. In 2019, the organization expanded its service area to Essex, Hudson, Morris, and Passaic in addition to Bergen County and changed its name to YWCA Northern New Jersey.

Helen served as a state appointed member of the NJ State Task Force on Campus Sexual Assault and is a Co-Chairperson of the NJ Coalition Against Human Trafficking's Legislative Committee, and a member of the Non-profit Steering Committee of Commerce and Industry Association of NJ. In 2019, Helen received the Crime Victim's Rights Award from the NJ Office of the Attorney General and the Excellence Award of Victim's Justice. She was also named among The Powerful Women of NJ in Senator Loretta Weinberg's 2019 Women Power List. In 2020 Helen received the Top 50 Women in Business from NJ Biz and the Top 25 Women in NJ Award from Leading Women Entrepreneurs. Helen is an adjunct professor at Montclair State University since 2005 in the School of Social Work. Her love for her work in social justice is only topped by her love for her husband and seven-year old twins.

Jessica has been working in the social service field for over 20 years. With a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from Ramapo College and Master's Degree as a macro practitioner in Social Work from Fordham University, she has dedicated her career to helping the underserved and disenfranchised communities of New Jersey. From 2009-2017, Jessica worked throughout Essex County, primarily Newark, NJ, to help families cope and manage high-risk behavioral and emotional needs of their children. Since that time, she was linked to Innerfaith Performing Arts Center in Paterson, and is still a sitting board member that serves proudly and diligently. Currently working as the Mission-Based Coordinator at YWCA Northern New Jersey overseeing women empowerment and racial justice initiatives, Jessica has coordinated numerous programs and initiatives including Martin Luther King birthday events, female entrepreneurship workshops, women's leadership seminars, voter registrations, and a Systematic Racism Town Hall. Most recently and as part of her love for working toward the safety and protection of all children, she volunteers as a Court Appointment Special Advocate for children in the foster care system. She continues to promote equality and

equity for all through organizing and activism work. Jessica is mother of two beautiful children, Amelia and James, and wife to a wonderful husband, Jimmy Copell.

Jessica Bacon, Ph.D, Dr. Alicia Broderick, and Dr. Elaine Gerber – *Pursuing Disability Justice at Montclair State University*

Dr. Jessica Bacon is an Assistant Professor in the department of Teaching & Learning at Montclair State University. Jessica co-coordinates the increasing access to college project, which provides college-aged adults with intellectual disabilities an inclusive college experience. Jessica's research is informed by the field of disability studies and she investigates how neoliberal educational policies impact the inclusion of students with disabilities, the role of curriculum in promoting disability rights in schools, and the impact of post-secondary inclusive programming for people with intellectual disability labels.

Dr. Alicia Broderick is a Disability Studies scholar and a Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning, who is presently serving as President of the newly launched MSU Disability Caucus. She is currently working on a book titled *Autism, Inc.: The Autism Industrial Complex*.

Elaine Gerber is a Medical Anthropologist and Disability Studies scholar, and a former president of the Society for Disability Studies. Prior to joining the MSU faculty, she served for five years as the Senior Research Associate for the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB). She received her Ph.D. from the UCLA and her B.A. from the University of Michigan. Her work examines the intersection between culture and the body, initially with a focus on women's reproductive health. More recently, her work has focused on disability, and one current project concentrates on food insecurity and the experience of disablement. There are both theoretical contributions and practical applications to her work. At MSU, she teaches several GenEd classes, including Cross-cultural Health and Healing (ANTH 180) and Introduction to Disability Studies (ANTH 105), as well courses for majors in Anthropology.

Dr. Bond Benton and Daniela Peterka-Benton – *Hidden Agendas: How Hate Groups Co-Opt Good Intentions Online*

Bond Benton is an Associate Professor of Public Relations at Montclair State University. His doctorate is from the University of Vienna with his dissertation focusing on the influence of culture on meaning. A particular focus of Dr. Benton's research is the interaction of media, branding, and cross-cultural communication as it relates to the values and decisions of constituencies. His first book, *The Challenge of Working for Americans: Perspectives of an International Workforce*, was released in 2014.

Daniela Peterka-Benton is an Associate Professor of Justice Studies at Montclair State University. Her doctorate is in Sociology with a specialization in Criminology from the University of Vienna. Her research interests center around transnational crimes such as human trafficking, human smuggling, arms trafficking, and right-wing terrorism and extremism. Prior to her focusing on a full-time academic career, Daniela Peterka-Benton worked for the U.S. State Department's Office of Diplomatic Security at the U.S. Embassy in Vienna, Austria.

Dr. Norma Bowe and Belki Aguirre – *Changing the Landscape for Peace on an Abandoned Lot in Newark N.J.*

Dr. Norma Bowe has undergraduate degrees in Nursing and Community Health, a Masters in Health Administration and a Ph.D. in Community Health Policy. She began her career bringing medical care to rural areas in Fluvanna County, Virginia. She has also worked in the ICU, ER, and Hospice assisting with those patients transitioning from life to death and families experiencing loss and bereavement. Dr. Bowe is tenured faculty in the College of Education at Kean University for the last 20 years. She developed the course curriculum for Death in Perspective, Community Mental Health and Health and Social Activism. She is the director of Be the Change NJ and has organized community services projects across the country; addressing issues of social justice, food justice and human rights.

Belki Aguirre is a graduate student at Kean University. She obtained her undergraduate degree in Psychology and will be acquiring her Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy. She has been working alongside Dr. Bowe as her graduate assistant for about a year and a half. She has worked on many volunteerism projects along with other members of Be the Change NJ such the community gardens, Operation PB&J, Dream Big and others.

Claudia Cortese, MFA – *Fatness Everywhere/Fatness Nowhere: The Hidden Epidemic of Fatphobia*

Claudia Cortese is a poet, essayist, and fiction writer. Her debut full-length, *Wasp Queen* (Black Lawrence Press, 2017), won Southern Illinois University's Devil's Kitchen Award for Emerging Poetry. Her work has appeared in *Bitch Magazine*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *Gulf Coast*, and *The Offing*, among others. Cortese received a 2018 OUTstanding Faculty Ally of the Year certificate from the LGBTQ+ Center at Montclair State University and is the Book Reviews Editor for *Muzzle Magazine*. She teaches in

Montclair State's Department of Writing Studies, as well as in MSU's Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies program and Creative Writing program. The daughter of Neapolitan immigrants, she grew up in Ohio's Rust Belt and lives in New Jersey. You can find her on Twitter @theclaudster, where she tweets about fat positivity and dismantling diet culture.

Melissa Denizard – *How to Resist the Youth Activist Industrial Complex*

A native of Haiti, Melissa Denizard (she/her/hers) is a 21-year old pro-Black organizer, activist, and documentarian. Along with providing a grounding for her political ideology and praxis, Black Feminism serves as a guiding light for Melissa's perpetual self-reflection. Melissa uses several mediums—including public speaking, film, digital media, and the written word—to help innovate Gen Z's approach to political theory and discourse, specifically in regards to how we address issues relating to race, gender, and social class within the united states' political framework. You can find her on Instagram @themelissadenizard.

Susan Graziano, MSN, APN – *LGBTQ Health Disparities*

Susan is a certified adult Nurse Practitioner (NP) with 44 years of experience in the medical field. She recently retired from her job as assistant director of the Montclair State University Health Center. Susan graduated from the University of Delaware with her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing and Seton Hall University with her Masters of Science in Nursing. She earned a certificate in LGBT Health from Drexel University.

Susan worked as a primary care NP in college health, seeing patients for various medical needs, both acute and chronic. She is a LGBTQ ally and insured an inclusive safe space for students at the Health Center. She initiated changing the wording on health forms to encompass all students. She instituted protocols for the prescribing of PrEP and assisting students with hormone injections.

Susan is a member and former President of the NJ College Health Association and was awarded the College Health Excellence Award in 2017. She was also awarded the StandOUT Award by the Montclair State University LGBTQ Center in 2016.

Bianca Mayes, MPH, CHES – *How to Reclaim Your Rest + Practice Resiliency as a QTPOC*

Bianca's career has been centered around general healthcare for vulnerable populations. Prior to joining Garden State Equality in November 2017, Bianca served as a Health Educator and Research Associate for the Community Education and Population Health Department respectively at Atlantic Health System. As a Health Educator she planned, implemented, directed, maintained, and evaluated community health and wellness programs including health education, healthy eating, and physical activity. In her Research Associate role, Bianca gathered and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data collection for each healthcare system.

A graduate of Montclair State University, Bianca holds a Master of Public Health with a concentration in Community Health Education. During Bianca's graduate education, she worked as a Health Promotion Supervisor for the Health Promotion department. In this role, she developed and implemented a tobacco cessation group for the students and faculty/staff via the Tobacco-Free Campus Task Force. As a result of her efforts, Montclair State University will be tobacco-free by 2020! For her graduate internship, Bianca worked as a Digital Education Specialist for Planned Parenthood Federation of America. In this role, she contributed to the implementation paper about conducting an evaluation of a digital health intervention completely in the digital space.

After graduation, Bianca became an adjunct professor at Monmouth University teaching Substance Use and Abuse. Bianca received her B.S. at William Paterson University of New Jersey with a minor in Women's & Gender Studies in 2015. Bianca was born and raised in New Jersey. In her free time, this Gryffindor loves to travel, read, and explore new restaurants!

Leonie McDermott – *Sankofa: Black History is the Blueprint*

Leonie McDermott is an alumni of Montclair State University. She was the President of the Black Student Union of the SGA, a student worker in Red Hawk Central and the IT Service Desk. She obtained her degree in Psychology and will be pursuing her Master's in African American Studies.

Niberca Lluberes (Gigi Polo) – *Race, Identity, and Power: Shifting Oppressive Systems*

Niberca Lluberes (Gigi Polo) is an interdisciplinary designer; her practice combines art and design, pedagogy, and research. She launched her studio, Myellow Boots, in 2005, working as an art director for Maurice Villency and, subsequently, as an independent designer for Condé Nast, Hearst, Carnegie Hall, NYC Department of Education, among others. Gigi directed, produced, and edited a documentary about bipolar disorder and artistic temperament called Madly Gifted, which has been screened in several places, such as Hawaii, New York, and the Dominican Republic. She is the Art Director and co-founder of the PrinterNet Studio.

Gigi is a professor of design, media, and film at Parsons, The New School for Design, LIM College, Montclair State University, CUNY Graduate Center, and College of Staten Island. Her research focuses on the intersection between education, neuroscience, and social justice in relation to new pedagogical models in the context of art and design; she is currently developing projects in Augmented and Virtual Reality.

Sanford Shevack Ed.D – *Impacts of College-In-Prison Education*

Sanford Shevack Ed.D was involved in prison reform since 1973. He co-Founded the Juvenile Education and Awareness Project and renovated 5 buildings creating affordable housing and facilities for a preschool in Passaic and Paterson. He also worked in a community farm in Sandinista Nicaragua during Reagan's Contra War. He has obtained grants for NGOs in Guatemala to construct 3 schools in Mayan communities and organized the painting of 6 human rights themed murals. Sandford has helped bring tons of medical supplies and equipment into Cuba. His organization sponsors the Bella Chanel Mentoring Program for girls in Passaic.

His doctorate dissertation is "From Confinement To College: Impacts of College-In-Prison Education on Former Inmates of East Jersey State Prison, NJ."

Dominique-Faith Worthington – *Juvenile Corrections: Incarceration and Justice*

Dominique-Faith is an Holistic Practitioner Interfaith Minister who is currently studying at Montclair State to become a Juvenile Defense lawyer and advocate, to work with families who have children within the system. She is interested in working on difficult cases such as older juveniles in the system, children of veterans, and refugee/ migrant families. She supports mental, spiritual and physical health approaches in law and advocacy. Dominique-Faith believes the root to society solutions is a holistic approach. She is currently studying Jurisprudence, law and society, Child advocacy and social work; and Global security and diplomacy.