

Wilder School *in Action*

Spring 2023

Growing Equity for Entrepreneurs

Elsie Harper-Anderson advances Richmond as a national
model for entrepreneurial study and investment



P. 3 "TRIPLE PANDEMIC" BOOK

P. 4 VR AND POLICE INTERROGATION

P. 12 EQUITY FOR ENTREPRENEURS



VCU L. Douglas Wilder School of
Government and Public Affairs



Wilder School *in Action*

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Letter from the dean's office



Dear Friends,

At the Wilder School, our collective success hinges on the decades of thought leadership and experiential knowledge our faculty instructors bring to each classroom. With guidance from these world-class educators and researchers, our talented students gain the real-world skills to effect transformative change in their communities.

Our array of degree programs and certificates, hands-on research, student organizations and service learning courses create one-of-a-kind opportunities and life-changing experiences. Our faculty and staff are committed to ensuring our graduates emerge as critical thinkers and career-ready global citizens who are ready to take on any challenge.

We hold the distinction of being ranked the top school of public affairs in Virginia and 35th in the nation in 2023, according to U.S. News & World Report. This distinction places us in the top 15% of universities in the nation. We are also recognized as 29th in public management and leadership. These rankings speak to our reputational excellence, but there is so much more to our identity.

The stories you'll read within this edition showcase *why* the Wilder School is recognized as a national leader in equity research. From areas like emergency planning and crisis response to housing insecurity and analysis of entrepreneurial ecosystems, we take a comprehensive approach to lend a voice to underrepresented and historically marginalized groups.

You'll also learn about the Commonwealth Poll, a long-standing bellwether of public opinion in the commonwealth. L. Douglas Wilder, the 66th governor of Virginia, brings his extensive expertise to bear on perspectives and trends revealed by recent polling. These critical research areas are essential to inform public leaders and innovate policymaking.

We're proud of our strong network of nearly 12,000 alumni, who share professional support and exemplify why Wilder School graduates go on to incredible things. From early-career professionals to seasoned community leaders, these transformative individuals effect powerful change. Within these pages you'll learn about Myra Goodman Smith, president and CEO of Leadership Metro Richmond, and Joshua Son, senior planner for the Richmond, Virginia, Department of Planning and Development Review.

The convergence of academics, research and service makes the Wilder School a community with a dedication to transformation. We've honed a successful blueprint to develop agents of change, and we know our students, faculty and alumni learn as much from one another as they do from us. 🏛️

Best regards,

Susan T. Gooden, Ph.D.
 Dean
 L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs
 Virginia Commonwealth University



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Boots on the ground

Chernoh Wurie adds Army National Guard to a growing list of professional experiences

BY DAVID SLIPHER

A couple of years ago, Chernoh Wurie was driving with his family as they watched the procession of an Army National Guard vehicle convoy. Wurie, an assistant professor of criminal justice at the Wilder School, remarked half-jokingly to his wife, “I’d love to do that someday.” On another occasion at the beach, a passing Coast Guard helicopter stirred similar feelings for this persistent “someday.”

That someday became a reality when Wurie officially signed on for a post with a ground transport unit. He’d grown somewhat restless and wanted to “get back in action” in the field. At 41, he had to receive a special age exception waiver. His extensive experience in criminal



“I did this for my kids. My son is only seven years old, and I did it for him to wake up one day and be like, ‘You know, my dad joined the army at 41. I can do anything I want in this world.’ — Chernoh Wurie



Joining the army at 41 has earned Wurie huge “dad points” with his children, Eliza and Jamessi.

justice practice and theory made him an ideal candidate, and after a few congressional letters of recommendation, he officially became one of the oldest service members to attend basic training.

When Wurie deployed for basic training, he was eager to become part of a new team again. He was assigned to Delta company, made up of between 150 and 200 enlisted soldiers. He was missing the feeling of service and the familiar camaraderie he’d developed with his law enforcement community.

Physical activity was another component he was excited about. Delta company would wake up at 4:30 in the morning, conducting drills, going for runs and doing countless pull-ups.

“I went into it in good shape, but I came out in great shape,” Wurie said. “I’m in the best shape of my life. It was the mental part that was hard — as a 41-year-old male being around a bunch of 20-year-olds. I felt like, ‘You all are the age of my students!’”

Wurie tried to fly below the radar, but the younger cadets quickly ferreted out both his age and seasoned experiences. As a result, he was volunteered for a lot of leading roles, such as platoon leader and team lead for Soldiers Against Sexual Assault, which helped build relationships with his unit.

For some, the National Guard culture wasn’t a good fit. But for Wurie, the best part was dramatically walking through the smoke at his graduation ceremony while his family cheered him on.

“I did this for my kids,” he said. “My son is only 7 years old, and I did it for him to wake up one day and be like, ‘You know, my dad joined the army at 41. I can do anything I want in this world.’ To get my son to brag about me — that’s dad points, you know.”

‘Triple Pandemic’ showcases the breadth of Wilder School research

BY DAVID HAYTER

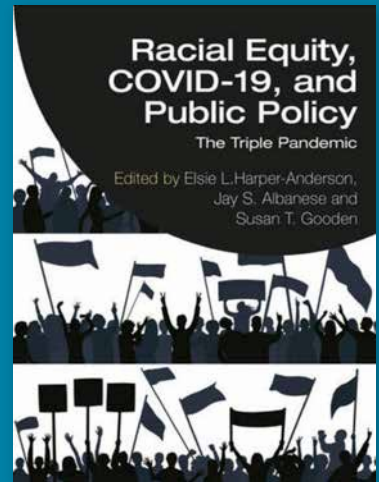
As part of the Wilder School Racial Equity Action Plan research priorities, Elsie Harper-Anderson, Jay Albanese and Susan Gooden co-edited the volume “Racial Equity, COVID-19, and Public Policy: The Triple Pandemic,” published by Routledge in February.

This volume takes a critical look at how many existing areas of racial inequality in the United States rose to the surface as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020. Broad and interdisciplinary in its approach, the collection of original research unites faculty from each of the Wilder School’s program areas. Utilizing a variety of research methods, each chapter falls under one of three subsections that comprise the “triple pandemic”: health, justice and economics. The chapters weave historical context and exacerbations caused by COVID-19 with policy implications and recommendations.

In a foreword to the volume, Governor L. Douglas Wilder notes with pride that the authors “coalesce in providing a blueprint and guidelines to deal with present and future problems.” The book, he notes, will “provide awareness, research and solutions from which to draw in meaningful resolve.” Beyond strict policy implications, Governor Wilder notes that all readers “will be further enlightened as to what every citizen can do” to battle racial injustice in the U.S. moving forward.



Order your copy and save 20% with discount code “EFL01” at bit.ly/wspandemic



The volume has 25 authors, including 16 Wilder School faculty members, three Wilder School Ph.D. students, three Wilder School alumni, three faculty members from other universities and two practitioners:

- Jay Albanese
- RaJade M. Berry-James
- Curtis Brown
- Maria Dougherty
- Nakeina Douglas-Glenn
- Lindsey Evans
- Susan Gooden
- Elsie Harper-Anderson
- Kate Howell
- Amidu Kalokoh
- Brittany Keegan
- Steven Keener
- Hans Louis-Charles
- Christina Mancini
- Robyn McDougale
- Will Pelfrey
- Grant Rissler
- Jacqueline Smith-Mason
- Frances Stadlin
- Nathan Teklemariam
- Ben Teresa
- Lemir Teron
- Janice B. Underwood
- Blue Wooldridge
- Chernoh Wurie

Groundbreaking virtual reality research to inform youths' police perceptions

What can VR reveal about police interrogations?

BY DAVID SLIPHER

Associate Professor Hayley Cleary is exploring the slippery slope between permissible police interrogation techniques and coercion in police interrogations. Research shows that youths' developmental immaturity makes them vulnerable and more likely to provide false confessions to escape police

pressure or appease investigators. The boundaries of this fine line have yet to be fully defined, and courts determine voluntariness on a case-by-case basis.

"Virtual reality is uncharted territory for interrogation research and is poised to transform the way we study these interactions,"

Cleary said. "VR enables us to simulate real-world interrogations while also retaining experimental control and ensuring participant safety — it's the best of both worlds from a research perspective."

The study, supported by a VCU Quest Fund, is aimed at informing both law and policy, particularly for individuals of color, who may experience heightened disadvantage in interrogations. Cleary's aim is to help establish equitable legal processes and reform systems for all youth.

Filmed in an actual Richmond Police Department interrogation room, the VR simulation places research participants in an immersive scenario in which a detective questions a young person using a variety of interrogation techniques. Sitting closely beside the questioned subject and across from detectives, the research participant witnesses the full

interrogation. The sensory VR immersion experience is called "embodiment," a perceived substitution of a person's physical identity with that of a virtual body. Embodiment creates a powerful sense of agency and participatory involvement throughout the process.

Participants report their perceptions of custody and coercion during and after the VR experience. The study also captures physiological biofeedback signals throughout the entire virtual experience. Combining the qualitative and quantitative data will give Cleary an unprecedented window into the minds of developing youth.

Cleary first conceptualized the scenario a few years ago, but she needed a partner to help implement the project on the technical side. Serendipitously, she learned about David Waltenbaugh, a VCU double alumnus ('06 B.S. and '10 M.A.).

Waltenbaugh is CEO of Root VR, a Richmond-based organization focused on developing virtual platforms to support adolescents' mental health and therapy. After two years of planning, Waltenbaugh and Cleary combined the research

and tech angles to bring the project to life. They connected with Brian Dismore of Moon Day Productions and brought on two more VCU connections — Doug Blackburn, adjunct professor of theatre, and Joel DeVaughn, a theatre undergraduate student — to join the team as actors.

"Virtual reality is primarily recognized as a means of next-generation entertainment and social engagement, but the technology's incredible potential to change the future of science, education, health care, criminal justice and so many other areas of study remains largely unappreciated," Waltenbaugh said. "It has the ability to change our understanding of the world and the way we experience it."

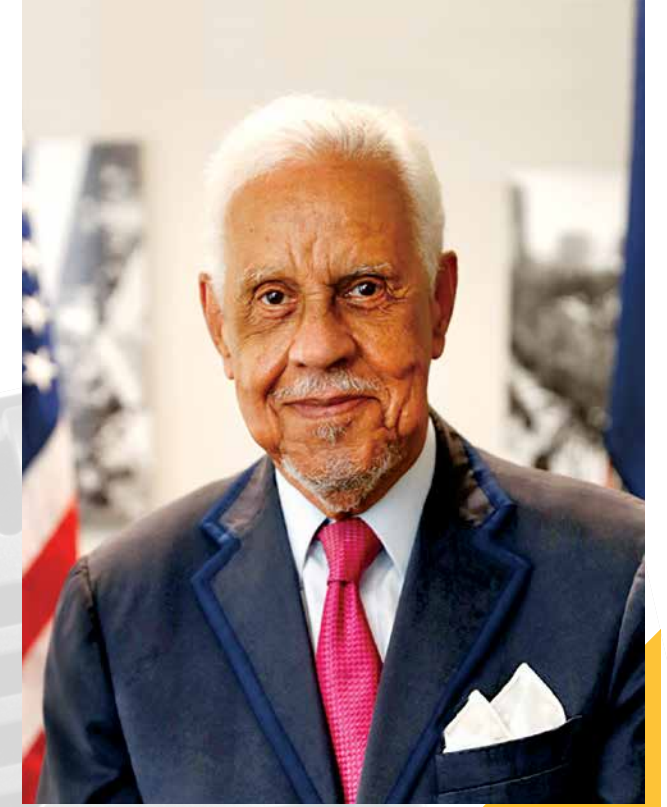
“VR enables us to simulate real-world interrogations while also retaining experimental control and ensuring participant safety — it's the best of both worlds from a research perspective.”

— Hayley Cleary

Governor's voice

Exploring the Commonwealth Poll

66th Governor of Virginia L. Douglas Wilder shares his perspective on the Wilder School Commonwealth Poll, a longtime bellwether and trusted source for public opinion in Virginia.



Q In recent polling, we see extreme polarization by Democrats and Republicans on the issues each party sees as most important. How can we develop effective priorities that reflect the public view?

A The policy changes that might be reflected in the polls sometimes suggest that there are uniform opinions held by the members of the Senate, members of the House and the president. Unfortunately, that isn't always the case. We are finding that polls have changed significantly through the years from yes or no answers — black and white answers — to more complex and often divergent perspectives. I think the polls reflect uncertainty on behalf of the voters, the uncertainty associated with lack of accountability from those who are in charge to effect results. The real question is, "What are the issues that need to be addressed to reduce party differentiation?"

Q Are approval ratings indicative of performance, or is there more to the picture?

A Approval is too rounded of a word. Approval of how one stands on an issue? Approval of how one reflects the views of the people? Approval of how one makes sufficient effort to promote change?

Q On the topic of education, poll results indicate a decline in the perceived value of a college degree. More than half of respondents indicated that they do not think that the education from colleges and universities in Virginia is worth the cost.

A Over half of Virginians feel that an in-state college degree is not worth the cost. Tuition has increased at a rate that is no longer affordable for students and their families. The cost of a college degree is far too expensive. Start with that. Does it mean that certain things have to change? Yes. Like what? Like the tuition cost and administrative expenses — millions of dollars of spending on bureaucracies that don't benefit students at all.

Spending money on things doesn't mean that you're spending money for things. The government and legislature are being asked to indirectly curtail the cost, and if they cannot, why not?

Bringing equity to emergency management and disaster

BY DAVID SLIPHER



Curtis Brown

How do we identify and reconcile the racial and economic disparities caused by natural disaster recovery?

As natural disasters intensify in the U.S. due to climate change, many studies reveal that responses from federal, state, local, private and nonprofit agencies result in widely different outcomes for vulnerable, historically marginalized populations. These shortcomings dramatically affect their safety before and during a disaster, as well as their ability to financially recover in the aftermath.

Curtis Brown, a visiting senior practitioner in residence, is working in conjunction with the Wilder School Research Institute for Social Equity to identify inequities and increase resilience in these communities.

“The increased frequency and severity of disasters continue to expose inequities in policies and practices that directly contribute to disproportionate impacts,” Brown said.

Past and present discrimination, community redlining, lower property appraisal values, infrastructural divesting, high insurance costs and

challenges accessing government services are some of the key factors Brown is examining. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 74% of white Americans own their homes, compared to just 44% of Black

Americans, with a median difference of \$80,000 in home value.

In many cases, vulnerable populations live in closer proximity to locations at risk of disasters — especially coastal areas — and are more likely to become permanently displaced following a disaster. Brown’s research reveals that systemic exclusionary practices fail to account for the unique needs of underserved populations before, during and after disasters.

There are many potential solutions for improvement, such as shifting from damage-based to needs-based funding and implementing an “equity standard”

to evaluate recovery needs on an individual and community basis. Decreasing administrative barriers like financial relief response time and program eligibility for individual households are other proposed tools for reforming emergency responses.

As an expert crisis planner and former state coordinator at the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and deputy secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, Brown has submitted congressional testimony to help legislators better understand the unequal response that unevenly harms these groups in comparison to their white counterparts.

“This research is vital to our ability to reduce the disproportionate impacts of disasters in marginalized communities by identifying the necessary public policy changes to eliminate inequities and better support communities on the front line of disaster impacts,” he said. 📍

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The increased frequency and severity of disasters continue to expose inequities in policies and practices that directly contribute to disproportionate impacts.

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— Curtis Brown



The RVA Eviction Lab shines a spotlight on Virginia’s high eviction rate

BY PAM COX



The Wilder School’s RVA Eviction Lab has partnered with the University of Virginia’s Equity Center to provide data on landlords with high eviction court filings. Together, they created the Virginia Evictors Catalog, a database that catalogs property owner plaintiffs who have filed tenant evictions across Virginia. The goal is to use the data to learn how best to redress unjust eviction processes in the commonwealth.

Urban and regional studies and planning program associate professors Kathryn Howell, Ph.D., and Ben Teresa, Ph.D., are co-directors of the Wilder School RVA Eviction Lab. Its research shows that the City of Richmond eviction rate is greater than 11%, making it the second highest in the nation. Four other Virginia cities also make the top 10 list in the country. They are Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk and Chesapeake. Howell says eviction filings and judgments have returned to pre-pandemic levels and have an impact on renters regardless of economic circumstances.

“The social cost of housing instability is enormous. It affects the physical health, mental well-being, employment and educational attainment of individuals and families, with people of color being disproportionately affected,” said Howell. “Research demonstrates that housing instability is rooted not in individual or community failures, but in policies of exclusion, displacement, disinvestment and discrimination.”

Who are Virginia’s top evictors?

This is the first time that data collection has specifically tracked the property owners who are filing evictions. The Virginia Evictors Catalog data reveals that evictions are not evenly dispersed across landlords. In Richmond, for example, just 15 landlords are responsible for more than half of all evictions.

“This project is part of our ongoing work to respond to community needs for information that can prevent housing instability in the commonwealth,” Howell said.

Urban and Regional Studies and Planning graduate student and Wilder Fellow Hannah Woehrle has worked with the RVA Eviction Lab to compile the data for the eviction catalog. For Woehrle, it’s a valuable experience to reframe the narrative from those being evicted to those responsible for the evicting.

“When you’re studying the harms resulting from past policy and planning interventions, it can be hard to avoid a well-intentioned but ultimately disempowering victim rhetoric.” She added, “My hope is that by making data more accessible, the Evictors Catalog will help balance the power dynamic

between tenants and landlords, and shift the conversation around housing justice in the process.”

The Virginia Evictors Catalog is part of the Virginia Housing Justice Atlas project, which is being steered by an advisory committee made up of representatives from housing justice organizations in the Richmond and Charlottesville areas.

“This data tool is something our community partners have needed to conduct meaningful outreach, target resources and understand the potential for change,” Howell said. 📍



Associate Professor Ben Teresa, Ph.D., Co-Director of the RVA Eviction Lab



“This data tool is something our community partners have needed to conduct meaningful outreach, target resources and understand the potential for change.”

— Associate Professor Kathryn Howell, Ph.D.



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“I never said no to new opportunities — I kept learning.”

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— Myra Goodman Smith

Alumni changemaker: Myra Goodman Smith ('82 B.S., '84 M.P.A.)

BY RACHEL ZEEVE

For Myra Goodman Smith, public service is her life's work. From her days as a volunteer candy striper at MCV Hospital at the age of 14 to her current position as president and CEO of Leadership Metro Richmond, Smith has made a name for herself through her unwavering commitment to helping others.

“My academic and professional journey has been infused with community leadership and service, which began early in my life,” she said. At the helm of Leadership Metro Richmond, which has served the area for over four decades, Smith and the LMR team represent a transformative community engagement platform and leadership development initiative.

Through a social equity-based lens, LMR fosters strategic partnerships across organizations to create opportunities for community advancement and facilitate meaningful connections. LMR offers a 10-month leadership development

program as well as activities and networking opportunities that promote the growth of a diverse cohort of burgeoning change agents. “Since I was a teenager in Richmond, I have both worked with and observed leaders in action,” she said. “It is exciting to help them be more impactful and effective in our challenging times.”

Smith is a proud Richmond native and graduate of its public school system. “During my senior year of high school, I became one of the city council's youngest commissioners,” she said. “I continued to serve during my time at VCU. This experience showed me the power of influence and civic engagement.”

Her service with the city inspired her to pursue an urban studies and planning undergraduate major at VCU. By the time she reached her senior year, she was an intern in the lieutenant governor's office. “The urban studies degree prepared me for my first jobs as a regional economic development planner and a community

development planner,” she said. “The urban studies program also helped me understand the history and trends of critical community issues in the Richmond region.”

After receiving her bachelor's degree, she continued her Wilder School education and began the M.P.A. program — which she completed in just two years. “My M.P.A. prepared me to lead departments in technology, human resources, operations, campaigns and community programs,” she said. “I never said no to new opportunities — I kept learning.”

Today, she brings her vast expertise to the Jenkins Foundation, a \$60 million health legacy foundation that supports the Richmond region. As chair of the foundation, she advocates for its mission of promoting equitable access to primary health care, mental health services and substance abuse-related care. 🏠

VERBATIM

with Bob Holsworth 🏛️

During a recent Lunch and Learn virtual presentation, Bob Holsworth, Ph.D., analyzed the 2022 election results and examined implications for upcoming election races in Virginia and Washington.

Holsworth is one of the leading political analysts in Virginia. His comments on Virginia and national politics have appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and many other news publications. Holsworth established and served as the founding dean of the Wilder School.



Bob Holsworth

“The Republicans essentially wanted to make the race a referendum on President Biden, and the Democrats decided that ultimately their strategy was to make the election into a choice on some key ideological issues.”

“There's going to be a lot of positioning for the 2024 election, and we just don't know how some of these battles are going to be resolved. If Washington politics was pretty toxic beforehand, it's unlikely to see any improvement whatsoever.”

“We have very serious challenges that are emerging because of the same kind of election denialism that prompted Jan. 6. It's generating a lack of faith in elections among at least a certain group of people, and that is becoming highly problematic.”

“Democrats thought the Republican Party had become too extreme — a ‘MAGA’ Republican Party — and the Democrats certainly benefited from the Dobbs decision in the early summer when the Supreme Court eliminated *Roe v. Wade*.”

“It's going to be an interesting time in Virginia and across the country. In any case it will be a great year, and it'll keep pundits like me working.”

Faculty accomplishments and achievements

The Wilder School produces outstanding scholarship, service and leadership — locally and nationally



▲ **Damian Pitt, Ph.D.**, is a co-director for the newly created Institute for Sustainable Energy and Environment. VCU's Office of Research and Innovation launched the center to address the existential threat of climate change. It is dedicated to creating sustainable energy systems and sustainable ecologies

while educating students and working with community partners to meet these challenges. Pitt is an associate professor in the Urban and regional studies and planning program. He is focused on finding ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions through energy conservation, renewable energy use, land use and transportation policies.



▲ **Jay Albanese, Ph.D.**, served as principal investigator for a joint cybercrime research project between VCU, Old Dominion University and Virginia Tech. The project, funded by a grant from the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative, analyzed data on cybercrime victimization experienced by residents and

businesses across Virginia. The commonwealth was selected as the focus because of its large workforce in the maritime, defense and transportation sectors compared to other states. The project's goal is to reduce exposure to cyber victimization across Virginia by identifying the highest-priority threats and cybercrime methods. The research then provided an assessment of geographic, demographic and industry variation in victimization across the state. Albanese is a professor in the

Fran Bradford joins Capitol Semester program as new instructor

Fran Bradford joins the Wilder School's Virginia Capitol Semester program as an instructor. She served as Virginia secretary of education under Governor Ralph Northam's administration and is a senior vice president for McGuireWoods Consulting. Bradford brings more than 30 years of experience with the Virginia

Legislature and is excited to join the program.

"I am thrilled to have the opportunity to be a part of the VCU Capitol Semester," Bradford said. "This program and the Wilder School are without peers. From the hands-on experience of working during the session to having a chance to hear from

policymakers across government, I am hopeful the students will have a meaningful experience. I know I am looking forward to learning from the students about their views of government and ways it can be more responsive to the views of those who will soon play important roles in it."

The Capitol Semester program helps undergraduates gain a better understanding of the legislative process, utilizing a two-pronged approach of classroom instruction and an internship at the Capitol. Students spend 15-20 hours per week working directly with members of the Virginia Legislature

to learn the realities of formulating public policy.

Paula Otto, instructor and senior director of special projects at the Wilder School, has taught the course for five years. In the classroom, she helps students grow a deeper understanding of the workings of the Virginia General Assembly.

The Virginia Capitol Semester began in 2006. As a final assignment, students put their experiences to the test by presenting and defending a bill to their classmates' subcommittees to see if it can survive the actual process.

"The Capitol Semester program gives students the opportunity to not only learn the legislative process, but also to participate in it," Otto said. "Their internship in a member's office coupled with the classroom component creates a powerful experience."



Criminal Justice program. He is a fellow of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences and co-founder of Criminologists Without Borders. He is the author and editor of 20 books on organized crime, ethics, corruption, transnational crime and criminal justice.



▲ **Jeremy Hoffman, Ph.D.**, is the coauthor of a Richmond-based study that explored how walking in urban green spaces, compared to manmade settings, benefits physiological and psychological well-being. The study, "The impact of urban walking on psychophysiological well-being," was

conducted during the pandemic shutdown. It enlisted healthy adults from Richmond to take a 20-minute walk on two separate days. They were outfitted with sensors that tracked their heart rate and their exposure to heat, noise and air pollution in two different environments. One environment was a tree-lined street with homes, gardens and parks. The other environment was a busy street with traffic, shops and restaurants. The study concluded that walking in the green space increased positive mood and healthy heart rate variability, lowered thermal discomfort and exposure to air pollution, and could have implications on how to ease stress.

Hoffman is the David and Jane Cohn Scientist at the Science Museum of Virginia and an affiliate faculty member in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs and the Center for Environmental Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. He teaches physical geography at VCU and specializes in Earth science communication, data-driven and community-based participatory science, and science center exhibit content development.



▲ **Shruti Syal, Ph.D.**, is a recipient of a Wilder School Faculty Small Grant. It will support her continued research to find solutions to waste and water problems in Delhi, India. This grant will allow Syal to create a digital map to identify actors involved in infrastructure provision, their roles and their relationships.

It's an effort to improve communication and collaboration regarding otherwise conflicting agendas or actions for water treatment, waste management and infrastructure provision in the largely overlooked parts of cities, referred to as slums. Each year, the Wilder School awards two Faculty Small Grants of up to \$10,000 for a project directly related to the scholarly trajectory of a faculty member.



▲ **Meghan Gough, Ph.D.**, and **Kathryn Howell, Ph.D.**, were awarded a Wilder School Faculty Small Grant for their research to develop a new process framework for urban planners that is forward-

thinking and racially equitable. It will focus on three redevelopment proposals that had an impact on Black

RaJade Berry-James leads NASPAA

Senior Associate Dean

of Faculty and Academic Affairs RaJade Berry-James, Ph.D., is the newly elected vice president of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration. She continues the Wilder School NASPAA leadership as shared by past President Dean Susan Gooden during the 2021-2022 academic year. As vice president, she will provide leadership for the executive board and will assume the presidency for the 2023-2024 year. NASPAA is the globally recognized accreditor of master's degree programs in public policy and administration and is dedicated to providing education and training for public service and promoting the ideals of public service.



neighborhoods and exposed biased planning to identify the long-term impacts of urban renewal, highways and other redevelopments in Richmond, Virginia. Collaboratively, they will envision opportunities for reparative planning and redress policies. Gough is an associate professor and chair in the urban and regional studies and planning program. Howell is an associate professor in the urban and regional studies and planning program and co-director of the RVA Eviction Lab.



▲ **Saltanat Liebert, Ph.D.**, and **Grant E. Rissler, Ph.D.**, piloted a needs assessment to identify barriers to integration that Virginia's immigrants encounter. The assessment was commissioned by the

Office of New Americans at the Virginia Department of Social Services. They interviewed 44 immigrants and 51 organizations serving immigrants and other community stakeholders. Based on their findings and geospatial data, they proposed several policy solutions to address the unmet needs of and barriers to integration. The solutions include creating a centralized, multilingual online portal and toll-free hotline that provides up-to-date information about services available and providing greater access to workforce opportunities matching immigrant skills to employment openings, certification recognition and career development programs. Liebert is an associate professor in the Center for Public Policy. Rissler ('17 P.P.A. from the Wilder School's public policy and administration program) is the assistant director in the Office of Public Policy Outreach, Center for Public Policy.

An informed future for entrepreneurial policymaking

The larger aim of the research is to help create a strong case for current and future investment and support for disadvantaged entrepreneurs, in Richmond and beyond. Harper-Anderson wants to inform policymakers not just through numbers, but by connecting on a personal level.

Combining macroeconomic data alongside direct experiences is a new approach she hopes will help open ears and invigorate action to help remove barriers for entrepreneurs. Richmond's Jackson Ward, once home to "Black Wall Street," one of the most thriving Black communities in the country, suffered decades of racist and systematic displacement and destruction.

The financial crisis of 2008 and the COVID-19 pandemic further cleaved the economic capital of Black and Latinx business owners. Harper-Anderson's previous research confirmed that the hardships of economic crises disproportionately impact minority groups, and further, that legislation aimed at recovery is less impactful to these groups.

Her early findings about the pandemic's impact on Black business owners informed a chapter in her forthcoming volume co-edited with Wilder School Dean Susan Gooden and Professor Jay Albanese titled "Racial Equity, COVID, and Public Policy: The Triple Pandemic." Harper-Anderson and Nathan Teklemariam, who completed his Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration at the Wilder School, explain how, through the CARES Act, Black businesses had a more difficult time accessing funds from the Paycheck Protection Program funds due to the way the legislation was written. In many cases preexisting systematic inequalities in banking relationships dictated the distribution of funds. The findings stemmed from Harper-Anderson's COVID-19 Rapid Research Funding Opportunity-funded project, funded by the VCU Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation and the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research, in 2020.



DAVID SLIPHER

Woodfin first learned of Harper-Anderson's research through the Jackson Ward Collective, a Black- and women-owned business.

Today, while more than half of Richmond's population is either Black (44.8%) or Hispanic (7%), only 11% of entrepreneurs are minorities, according to U.S. census data. Further, the city's poverty rate is now 25%.

"Richmond holds a unique place in the economic history of Black Americans," Harper-Anderson said. "As former home to the Confederacy and also the Black Wall Street of the South, the city has been on both sides of the Black economic pendulum, leading to embedded structures of systemic inequality alongside a deep-seated Black entrepreneurial spirit."

Eliminating barriers to success

Telisha Woodfin is the founder and owner of LIVLoved, a family agency that provides postpartum doula support, parent coaching and infant massage education to families of children from birth to 5 years of age.

Woodfin, a double alumna of VCU, having earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's in social work, is guided by a holistic approach. Her goal is to help develop healthy habits, strong parent-child bonds and interactions, and effective communication. As a mother of three, Woodfin formed LIVLoved during the height of the pandemic in the summer of 2020.

She first learned about Harper-Anderson's research as a founding member of the Jackson Ward Collective, a women-owned professional resource network for Black entrepreneurs in the Richmond area. The study is already

reframing her approach with LIVLoved.

"I've been more intentional about my goals," Woodfin said. "It really helps me take those objectives and create weekly or daily tasks. It forces me to change my perspective around what a barrier is for my business."

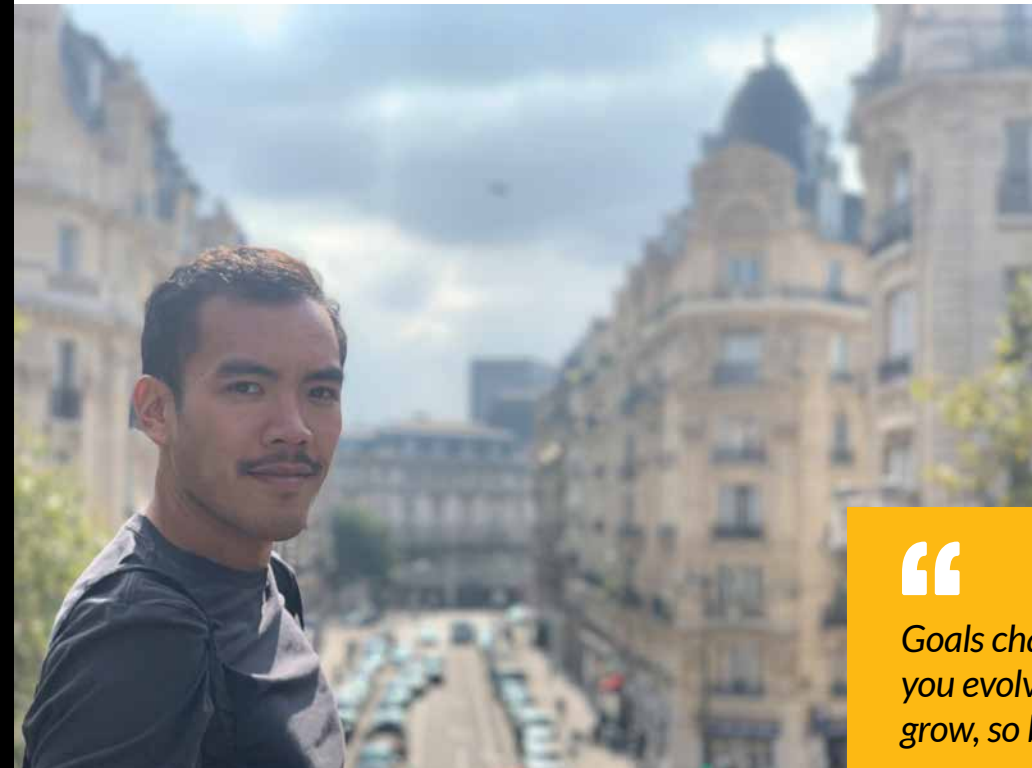
As a Black female business owner, Woodfin works to advocate for informed prenatal and postnatal planning that combats health concerns and childcare support disparities. Black women are two to three times more likely to die of pregnancy-related causes than white women, with more than half (52%) of these deaths occurring after delivery or during the postpartum period. These statistics, provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, reflect the national and state average.

Woodfin's refocused vision is helping her identify and eliminate internal and external barriers to her success.

"I love what I do, but I also know that some of the reason why folks really struggle is that we overextend ourselves," she said. "Historically, Black women have been treated as subhuman or superhuman. In this 'strong Black women' stereotype, we don't experience pain, stress or even grief the same as other women. The most challenging part of my work is educating Black women, in particular, on the importance of postpartum care and the implications that lack of support can have on their interpersonal relationships and physical and mental health. At LIVLoved, we help women not just to survive motherhood but to thrive in motherhood." 🏡

Alumni changemaker: Joshua Son, '14 M.U.R.P.

A curiosity about where and why developers decide to build unlocked a passion for urban planning and design



than I was used to in Virginia."

He credits the work experience he received as the senior planner and secretary for the Urban Design Committee with the City of Richmond. Son says that position provided him a strong foundation for his work ethic and gave him an understanding of how things get done, or accomplished, in the public sector. It aided him with the development of a new working committee in Chicago. The Committee on Design is a volunteer group of 24 urban design professionals that reviews projects with major implications for the urban design of the city.

“Goals change as you evolve and grow, so be open to new experiences.”

— Joshua Son

Son's work is fulfilling his fascination with how geography and demographics play a role in where and when buildings are placed. He says he enrolled in the Wilder School master of urban and regional studies and planning program because it was the best fit for his learning style.

"I wanted a degree from a program that

would not only provide a strong foundation in planning theory and other academic exercises but also a program that encouraged field experience because I learn best through doing."

He offers some sage advice for Wilder School students interested in urban planning or historic preservation.

"Any professional experience in this field is good experience; while it may not seem relevant to your ultimate goal at the moment, it may prove invaluable later," he added. "Goals change as you evolve and grow, so be open to new experiences." 🏡

record shops and coffee shops in downtown Norfolk, and that further shaped how I perceived downtowns — vibrant, bustling, creative and diverse."

Today, Son works as a city planner for the City of Chicago. Along with reviewing large, complicated development projects, he thrives as part of a team that is developing Chicago's own citywide framework plan. It's something that hasn't been done since the 1960s. Opportunities like this are what motivated Son to work in Chicago.

"I personally felt I would be cheating myself as an urban planner if I didn't try living in a bigger, more complex city with different politics, economics, natural resources, transportation and climate

Urbanist Joshua Son ('14 M.U.R.P.) says learning how to ride a bike gave him his first real sense of freedom. It sparked his love for exploration and allowed him to go places without having to worry about a car ride. He also credits his mom for providing structure while also affording him the opportunity to do what he wanted, which allowed him to have enriching experiences. This freedom was the catalyst that formed his interest in urban planning and historic preservation.

"I loved exploring downtowns and historic town centers. I noticed the mixed-use, dense nature of these areas and how different they were from the sprawl of the surrounding suburbs," Son said. "In high school, I would meet up with friends to check out live music and bands that would be playing in local

Eva S. Teig Hardy invests in the future of public service

BY RACHEL ZEEVE

A dedicated public servant, Eva S. Teig Hardy is committed to opening doors for students to take the leap into public administration. A desire to foster success in burgeoning leaders represents the founding principle behind the Eva S. Hardy Scholarship in Public Administration.

Established in 2007, the scholarship is awarded to meritorious graduate students. "I wanted to make sure that there is a crop of young people in the future who want to



pursue public service," said Hardy. "I thought a scholarship would be helpful to get people to make that extra jump."

Building career opportunities

Hardy's extensive career consists of many senior positions in the public and private sectors. Some of these roles include commissioner of labor and industry and secretary of health and human resources for Virginia. In addition, she served as interim state director for Senator Mark Warner. She retired from her position at Dominion Resources as an executive vice president. The first woman in the company to hold that title, she remained as an adviser.

Hailing from a family that emigrated from Egypt, Hardy has always prioritized education. "In our family, we talked about how our lives became better as a result of education, and because of that, I knew I wanted to help people who have faced disadvantages," she said.

Hardy is proud to fulfill that goal through the scholarship bearing her name. "I knew Governor Wilder his whole career," she reflected. "I always thought he was an incredibly talented individual who broke the biggest barrier of all, becoming the first African American governor in the country.

I greatly respected that and wanted to support the Wilder School."

Investing in talented students

Hardy understands the importance of paying it forward. "I received financial assistance as a student, and it was crucial to have that help at a time when I really needed it," she said.

David Lansdell (M.P.A. '22) was a fall 2022 scholarship recipient. "I completed my final semester while working full time," Lansdell said. "This scholarship alleviated a significant portion of my financial concern. I feel more confident in approaching a human-centric career with the idea that people like Mrs. Hardy believe in me, my passions and my abilities."

Hardy encourages students to learn from every experience. "Even if you don't get 'the big job' right away, start where you think you could learn the basics of public service," she said. "This means interacting with the public to help citizens understand policies. The Wilder School is very good at teaching the practical side of public service. Meeting people, explaining public policy and being able to help transform communities is not theoretical — it's about putting your feet on the ground to effect change." 🏡



Governor L. Douglas Wilder and Eva S. Teig Hardy visit the Great Wall of China.

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