

Ed Studies Newsletter

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Dr. Carter-Abdul

Editors

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Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Nicole A. Carter-Abdul

Dr. Nicole Carter-Abdul, alumni of the Urban Education concentration (2015), is currently Director of the Women's Center at Wright State University (WSU) in Dayton, Ohio. Her unique position allows her to support and advocate for students, staff, and faculty on campus. She conducts training sessions, writes policy, and develops programming. She is also a faculty member in the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department at WSU. Dr. Carter-Abdul's position allows her to connect with the larger Dayton community, and she works closely with the mayor's office, Women's Leadership Collaborative of Greater Dayton, and the arts community. She identifies as a "scholar-activist-artist" and describes her interests as "focused on epistemology, public pedagogy, art, performance, and the mind, body and spirit." In 2015, Dr. Carter-Abdul presented her paper *What's (Self) Love Got to Do With It?* at the AESA conference in San

Antonio, Texas.

Dr. Carter-Abdul reflects on her experience in the Educational Studies program, and says, "I loved the theoretical components of the course." She is interested in the relationship between theory and practice, and adds, "My current position blurs the lines of theory and practice as I am constantly asked to utilize both or to justify a program that I am planning or a policy I am attempting to change by grounding it in theory." In addition to appreciating the theoretically rigorous coursework provided by the Educational Studies program, Dr. Carter-Abdul notes:

The program also taught me about working diligently to get my goals accomplished, and about perseverance in the face of barriers. There are many barriers in my position, especially because I am one of maybe three Black women in my position in the nation and because I teach a full load of courses, but barriers are

like hurdles, you jump over them, and keep going.

Dr. Carter-Abdul reflects on the "ebb and flow of reading, thinking, and writing" during her dissertation process and states, "It was filled with happiness, sadness, anger, excitement and joy." She urges current cohort members to remember: "This is your journey, own it!" She also advises thoughtful practices of self-care as students become more heavily involved in research. Dr. Carter-Abdul describes the many powerful aspects of the research process, such as the analysis of interviews and putting together data into a larger narrative about Black women's public performance as critically pedagogical. In the end, she enjoyed seeing all the faces of other cohort members at her defense because "it showed me that they had supported my journey." Dr. Carter-Abdul recently received the First-Year Seminar Award for Outstanding Faculty Commitment to First-Year Seminars.

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies

The Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies prepares educators from a variety of community organizations (P-12 schools, higher education and other community contexts) to engage in effective research and practice about teaching and learning within complex social, political and economic systems. A key underlying emphasis of the program is a focus on poverty and its specific impact on urban, as well as suburban and rural communities.

Mark Your Calendars

3/15: Course registration opens; make sure to register as soon as possible

4/7: Community of Scholars
“Reflections on Finland”
5-6 pm Porter 301BC

4/24: Commencement

5/4: Summer semester begins

9/7: Fall semester begins

Reminder: Complete your annual review to submit to your advisor. Refer to the [student handbook](#) for more information.

Conference Corner

[American Educational Research Association](#) April 8-12, 2016
Washington, D.C.

American Educational Studies Association

[CFP](#) May 1, 2016 deadline

American Educational Research Association

[CFP](#) July TBD deadline

[International Conference on Critical Education](#) August 10-13, 2016
Middlesex University, London, UK

[Literacy Research Association](#)
November 30-December 3
Nashville, Tennessee



Katja Robinson, PhD Candidate

Research Focus: Katja Robinson

Katja Robinson, a PhD candidate from the Educational Studies Program, is in the process of completing her dissertation research. She is exploring the life-worlds of low-income single mothers in postsecondary education in two different countries—the USA and Germany—that represent the contrasting poles of a conservative and a liberal welfare regime. Her work is grounded in the qualitative research paradigm using the capabilities approach, developed by Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, as a theoretical framework that focuses on the inherent dignity of all people with attention drawn to what individual people *are actually able to do and to be* in order to address inequalities within and across nations. Katja explains that focusing on participants’ experiences will provide a better understanding of how student mothers cope with the challenges of child care, school, and work within each country, with the overarching goals of promoting public dialogue, informing policy, and improving the quality of life for single mothers and their children.

Katja praises the “respectful and responsive” faculty of the urban education program and reflects that this experience has “opened up the possibility for me to be courageous, of thinking outside the box, and to propose bold ideas.” She highlights a project from Dr. Valerie Polakow’s course: “The exercise of putting our feet in the shoes of a single mother with two children living in poverty clearly opened my eyes about some of the disastrous child care arrangements available—and how capabilities of single mothers and children are being thwarted by a (neo) liberal welfare regime.”

Katja recently returned from Germany, her country of origin, having completed her interviews there. She describes her research process as “complex, exciting, and challenging at times.” Katja is a mother of two young sons, and notes that while researching in Germany, she found that “flexibility, a positive attitude and family support kept me on top of things.” Back to her “established environment” in the United States, she is beginning her interviews with American mothers. We wish Katja well as she completes her dissertation and look forward to her defense in the coming months.

Where Are They Now?

Audrey Bernard, PhD Candidate (Cohort 3)

Assistant Professor of Speech-Language Pathology at Eastern Michigan University, tenure track

Dr. Nicole A. Carter-Abdul (Cohort 2)

Director of the Women's Center at Wright State University, tenure-track

Marguerite DeBello, PhD Candidate (Cohort 2)

Assistant Professor of Nursing at Eastern Michigan University, tenure track

Dr. John Lupinacci (Cohort 1)

Assistant Professor of Cultural Studies and Social Thought in Education at Washington State University, tenure track

Dr. Carmen Stokes (Cohort 1)

Associate Professor of Nursing, University of Detroit Mercy, tenure track

Kristi George, PhD Candidate (Cohort 1)

Instructor of Nursing at University of Michigan—Flint, tenure track

Dr. Celeste Hawkins (Cohort 1)

Assistant Professor of Social Work at Eastern Michigan University, tenure track

Dr. Iman Grewal (Cohort 1)

Full-Time Adjunct in Teacher Education at Eastern Michigan University



In Memoriam: Dr. PK Smith

It is difficult to mourn the passing of a dear friend. It is equally as difficult to find and appropriately place the right words to do justice to that person's life and memory. The mourning continues, along with the search for meaning in the passing of a noble life lost all too prematurely.

In the fall of 2015, the Teacher Education Department, and one could say the world more generally, experienced just such a loss when Dr. PK Smith passed after a courageous battle with cancer. And, perhaps, one could most appropriately mourn her passing by celebrating the gift she was to us all.

When we think of PK, curiosity, compassion, ethics, commitment and humor—along with a host of other admirable qualities—come to mind. PK was a student of critical theory, especially fond of the Frankfurt School, but also well read across a broad range of philosophy of education and committed to more recent scholarship focused on LGBTQ youth in schools. She loved movies, dogs, craft beer, bourbon and Jen Eastridge, not necessarily in that order. She was committed to public education working for over 30 years as a secondary English teacher and administrator in Ohio before coming to EMU. She joined the Social Foundations program in 2007 much to our delight. Her death cuts deep for us, both intellectually and personally. We miss her laughter, her political acuity, and her generosity to our students and to this department. But mostly, we miss her friendship.

Dr. Rebecca Martusewicz, Dr. Joe Bishop, Dr. Christopher Robbins, and Dr. Paul "Joe" Ramsey