



Vol. 6 Issue 4

*The Urban Health Institute serves as a catalyst that brings together the resources of Johns Hopkins Institutions with the City of Baltimore, and especially East Baltimore to improve the community's health and well-being, and in so doing serves as a model of community-university collaboration regionally and nationally.*

From the desk of ...

**Chris Gibbons, MD, MPH — UHI Associate Director**  
*Assistant Professor, Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health*

*I want to take this opportunity to update you on the activities of the Community Health Initiative (CHI) over the past few months and ask for your help in charting our course for the future.*

*This past year, we have been hard at work. As you may recall, we hired about a dozen East Baltimore community residents, trained them and then asked them to go out and talk to other residents about the assets found in their communities. I am excited to tell you that we have completed 185 interviews with African-American, White, and Hispanic East Baltimore residents. This is a huge number of interviews of this type and we should be very pleased with this accomplishment. I do not believe this has ever been done before in East Baltimore.*

*In addition, we hired 2 more East Baltimore Residents (Roxie Johnson and Ernest Smith) to work along with 2 students from Johns Hopkins (Ola Fajobi and Tanyka Sam) to begin the process of cod-*

*ing all the information we obtained. Just to remind you, every one of those 185 interviews was digitally audio-taped and then transcribed on paper word for word. Each recording yielded a transcript that was anywhere from 5 to 26 pages long. Next, Roxie and Ernest along with the two Hopkins students were trained by Dr. Kristen Mmari, a qualitative researcher, on how to identify the assets recorded in each of the interview transcripts. Dr. Samantha Illangasekare (Sam) and Dr. Joan Kub oversaw their work as they read every line of the transcripts and categorized the assets described in East Baltimore. This process took longer than we first thought it would, partly because some of the transcripts are just very long and we wanted to be sure we got it right. Long transcripts mean that people were actually very engaged with the interviewers and had a lot to say. As the All Partners suggested, working with interviewers from the East Baltimore community was the right way to go!*

*We completed the coding of 160 of the interviews and on October 30th, we convened an All Partners Assets Mapping meeting at Humanim on North Gay Street. The meeting was initiated with the purpose of discussing the data collected through interviews conducted by the CHI data collectors last year. Over 60 participants attended the meeting, which was led by All Partners members who have been intensely involved at various stages of this process.*

*The meeting kicked off with a review of some of the CHI's accomplishments. One major accomplishment from the first phase of the CHI was the creation and publication of a report led by Phil Leaf, UHI Senior Associate Director, titled "The Health and Well Being of Baltimore's Children, Youth and Families: Opportunities and Challenges 2012". This report explains the variances that exist in the assets, health and well-being of Baltimore's residents across 55 Community Statistical areas (CSAs). The report also demonstrates*

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## FROM THE DESK OF....

(continued)

how to use the existing data to be able to describe the different trends in Baltimore, and provides a baseline for the CHI's work. Copies were made available at the meeting, and the report can be found at: <http://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/media/healthwellbeingbaltimore.html>.

Ernest Smith, who served as the community co-chair for the methods planning team then provided an overview of the development of the interview guide as well as the interview process. Following that, Afiya Smith, one of the AmeriCorps members who conducted the in-depth interviews, shared information on recruitment and interviewing and provided examples of both the opportunities and challenges the data collectors faced. The coding process was the next big step in the CHI project. About 160 interviews were transcribed word for word and coded using Atlas.ti, a qualitative research software program, over the course of 6 months by a team of coders.

Working together, these coders organized the assets that community residents identified into sets of asset types and themes. Because the data from the interviews is so detailed and rich, the next step will be to look deeper into what community residents said about each asset type or theme. These asset

types and themes were presented at the meeting, and the critical question was proposed to the All Partners: What specific assets should we prioritize and look into first to understand in more depth? In order to start this discussion, the attendees formed breakout groups and discussed their collective priorities. They then presented their priorities and why they chose them to the larger group. Employment, healthcare, affordable housing, and education were some of the major themes that the breakout groups identified as priorities.

The meeting was also a chance for All Partners to discuss the challenges and limitations of the CHI process and some of the concerns they might have. The group discussed that one of the limitations of the asset data is that it does not identify every single asset in the community, but rather identifies types of assets. While we might not be able to list every single asset in the community, we will be able to identify some assets or types of assets that we never realized existed. Other All Partners members pointed out that this process began three years ago, and that the community wants to see results now. Given the enormous amount of data that was collected, the group discussed the importance of prioritizing specific themes that we can focus on imme-

diately to produce reports to share with the community as soon as possible.

The next step of the Community Health Initiative is to continue to bring together the community and university partners through smaller workshops in order to strategically examine each of the priority themes and work to move processes along that will propel the initiative's goal of improving the health of East Baltimore forward. CHI hopes to match the needs of the community with the identified assets, ultimately strengthening East Baltimore by promoting the health and well being of the invaluable residents and workers in the community.

Sincerely,



**Dr. Chris Gibbons**  
Associate Director  
Urban Health Institute

## HIGHLIGHT ON 2011 SMALL GRANTS RECIPIENTS: USING BALTIMORE HIV BEHAVIORAL SURVEILLANCE DATA FOR NEW LOCAL HIV PREVENTION PLANNING

by Elizabeth Toft, Program Coordinator

In 2011 Danielle German, Assistant Professor, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health received small grants funding in partnership with Colin Flynn, Chief, Center for HIV Surveillance and Epidemiology, Infectious Disease and Environmental Health Administration, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). Their project developed a system for using Baltimore HIV behavioral surveillance data to guide development of new HIV prevention plans to implement the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) in Baltimore.

JHSPH and DHMH have worked together to implement HIV behavioral surveillance activities in Baltimore since 2004, through a project known as the BESURE study (BEhavioral SURveillance REsearch). The small grants funding they received from the UHI made it possible to initiate a sys-

tem to facilitate greater local utilization of HIV behavioral data that their current funding did not cover. Baltimore is one of 12 metropolitan areas participating in CDC's Enhanced Comprehensive HIV Prevention Plan (ECHPP) project, designed to develop and implement local response plans to NHAS to reduce HIV risk and incidence in jurisdictions most affected by HIV. Danielle and Colin, along with doctoral student Sabriya Linton, worked together to identify specific behavioral surveillance indicators relevant to monitoring the ECHPP project and the National HIV/AIDS Strategy in Baltimore, such as HIV testing frequency, housing status, and specific HIV risk behaviors, which could be examined to show prevalence and trends over time. This process resulted in a report documenting prevalence of each indicator by race/ethnicity and HIV status for each BESURE wave to date, includ-

ing among injection drug users, men who have sex with men, and heterosexuals at high risk of HIV.

The project turned out to be a great success and their results have been shared on a local level within DHMH, the state health department as well as other community groups working with the HIV epidemic in Baltimore. The results of their project were published in the May 2013 Springer Aids and Behavior Journal. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10461-013-0513-1>

The partnership is now trying to create a more user friendly presentation of their findings so that it is more accessible to the community or anyone who may be interested. "We are hoping the data will lead to funding for others", said Danielle. They are also working to host the information online so it's accessible for anyone.

## MEET THE UHI'S COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY COORDINATING COUNCIL: LEON C. PURNELL

by Meron Solomon, Administrative Coordinator

Leon Purnell is the Executive Director of the Men and Families Center, formerly known as the Men's Center, Inc. located in East Baltimore. He's a lifelong resident of East Baltimore where he received many awards and scholarship offers for his scholastic and athletic achievements. He started his undergraduate career attending Morgan State University and later left to pursue managerial opportunities with a band. He then

returned to Coppin State University earning his B.S. in Social Science followed by his Master's degree in Education.

Leon's professional career is marked by work as a counselor for the Woodbourne Center and the Woodland Job Corps as well as 13 years as a psychiatric therapist at Johns Hopkins Hospital. In 1997, Leon was approached with the opportunity to become the director of the Men's Center. Leon wanted





to get started on new programs in the East Baltimore Community as soon as possible. He launched three focus groups to help guide the Center's vision and mission. Leon took note of how most of the men in the community had issues specifically with health care, re-entry and fatherhood. In response, he wanted to ensure that a lot of work went into meeting these needs early on in the center's life by providing programs in parenting, life skills and fatherhood issues addressing child support, custody, visitation rights and making houses safe for children.

Less than a year after the Men's Center opened its doors, a health clinic emerged. It was the result of Leon's good fortune and collaboration with a nurse practitioner and her husband, a psychiatrist, who worked tirelessly towards this effort. It was not funded by any agency, and Leon made sure to gather resources from other program budgets to make it work. He was often collecting sample medications from friends that were doctors to help keep people stable that could not afford medications. He emphasizes the importance of having a free clinic, because people in this community would not go to JHH unless they were in dire need. That dire need would result in them visiting an emergency room, waiting long periods of time and accruing high hospital bills. The Men's Center clinic greatly took off as community members continued coming for the services.

When asked about the evolution from the Men's Center into the Men and Families Center, Leon explained that most of the time women would accompany the men that came for the clinical services, and he wondered how many of

these men would have shown up otherwise. After a year or two of the center focusing on men only, he opened the clinical services to women as well. He states that there are many women coming home from prison on a number of charges, mostly drug related, and having everyone included was the proper next step.

"It's not easy when you have a community that's so used to settling for less" states Leon, and he wants and demands more of them. As an ambitious advocate for the community, Leon and his center staff and volunteers meet the community where they are and provide services or linkages to address the problems to the best of their capacity. The Men and Families Center provides programs not only on parenting but also life skills and computer usage. They also help with pre-employment by offering help in preparing resumes, online job applications and employment searches. The Center also provides referrals for housing and employment. In addition to his programs and services Leon donates space to Charm City (CC) Clinic who now handles the clinic and free health assessments. All those who volunteer their time at the clinic are also helping residents sign up for health insurance.

One of the center's upcoming projects, in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins JCHIP program, is a program in which the center will train community members to become Neighborhood Navigators. The navigators will go out into the surrounding community, block by block, referring their neighbors to the community health workers and nurse case managers under Sisters Together and Reaching (STAR). If they are Priority

Partners patients they will be returned to care via JCHIP. If they are not, they will be directed to the Men and Families Center for case management and the CC Clinic for health care. Their overall goal is to "reduce emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and most importantly, get everyone connected with a healthcare provider" thus creating a healthier East Baltimore.

Leon is committed to the East Baltimore community and is an outstanding voice for the underserved. Leon said "that the clinic has saved so many people's lives over the years. In a country this rich everyone should have basic health care". As Leon reflects on the challenges of directing a non-profit where the need can be much greater than the resources, he states that in his heart it was the right thing to do, and he has no regrets. His compassion and ambi-

"We are just trying to make East Baltimore the healthiest community we can find...we have done a lot of good things, and we have a lot more to offer... The things we do here, we are not financially rewarded for but we get great gratification out of seeing people's lives improved or saved".

*Leon Purnell*

tion has pushed him to lead an effort to serve those in need in real and tangible ways. With collaborations of hard-working individuals, and most importantly caring individuals, all things are possible. Leon's future vision for the center is to have it in a solid condition where someone will carry on his legacy. He also has put into motion a for-profit arm to create sustain-

ability for the center and the clinic, as well as providing opportunities for the re-entry population to be employed. Leon not only wants them to receive the services they need, but for them to also be able to be respectable members in their communities.

“This place has become a cornerstone for fair treatment and health related empowerment”, Leon says and the proof is in the communities they serve. Not only does he direct a major effort in the health and well-being of the East Baltimore community, but he is a voice for those who are not at the table to speak for themselves. As a community representative he is an essential part of the Urban Health Institute’s Community-University Coordinating Council. Leon is not afraid to confront the challenges that so often try to hinder efforts to better communities and non-profits from moving forward. His center and clinic continues to bring about real change in the lives of many East Baltimore residents and together with his team

strives to sustain it and make it flourish.

Leon has many affiliations, including being a life member of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity as well as a member and co-founder of Egbe Akokourin Rite of Passage. He is a Weinberg fellow class of 2005 and a graduate of Greater Baltimore Leadership Committee class of 2006. His political affiliations include the New 45th Political Organization and The East Democratic Organization also known as EDO. He was Chair of the Environmental Justice Partnership for 6 years, a well-known community advocate with Baltimore BEEP, a human rights group, and is currently the Vice President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Baltimore Chapter. Leon is an avid fan of many sports including baseball, football, basketball, bowling, billiards and golf. Having been into photography since high school he pursues it in his spare time.



We are lucky to have him be a part of our team.

*One of the major efforts of Leon’s center is to provide for families during the holidays. Each year, the Men and Families Center announces requests for their annual Thanksgiving baskets and Christmas baskets/toys give-away where community members are able to receive food, clothes, and other gifts during the holiday season where they otherwise would not be able to. If you would like to donate items or your time, please contact the center directly at 410-614-5353.*

## 2013-2014 SMALL GRANTS UPDATE

*by Elizabeth Toft, Program Coordinator*

The Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute (UHI) Small Grants Program was launched in 2008. The program was formed to stimulate and advance community-university collaborations around research and program development related to the health and well-being of the residents of Baltimore. To date over 80 grants have been awarded to collaborations between community organizations and Johns

Hopkins students or faculty that most successfully demonstrate the potential for advancing the health and well-being of the residents of Baltimore.

In total 14 grants were selected for funding this year. It was a competitive selection process as we received a total of 42 proposals. The selected grants range in focus from developing a Latino youth advisory committee, an

urban farm lab and a school age pedometer project. A complete list of this year awarded grants and past recipients is available at: [http://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/our\\_work/smallgrants.html](http://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/our_work/smallgrants.html)

Thank you to all who applied for funding, it’s wonderful to learn about all of the continued commitment and work to improve our community.

## THIRD ANNUAL HENRIETTA LACKS MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER ANNOUNCED: JOHNS HOPKINS URBAN HEALTH INSTITUTE AWARDS \$15,000 TO SAFE STREETS EAST

by Elizabeth Toft, Program Coordinator



*Gardnel Carter, accepting the award  
on behalf of Safe Streets East*

The Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute announced on Saturday, October 5, 2013 that Safe Streets East is the winner of the Third annual Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award. Named in honor of Henrietta Lacks, the award recognizes and supports Baltimore community organizations that are collaborating with Johns Hopkins University to improve the health and well-being of the city of Baltimore. The announcement was made at the Annual Henrietta Lacks Memorial Lecture at Johns Hopkins University Medical Campus. In presenting the award, Bob Blum, Director of the Urban Health Institute said “I read all of the nominations and there are few things that renew my faith in this extraordinary city as reading those nominations because it says at every corner, at every nook and spot in this city there are people who are passionately committed to building a better Baltimore and who are passionately committed to the health and wellbeing of their neighborhood.”

Safe Streets East is one of over a dozen established community-university collaborations from across the city nominated for the award of \$15,000. The organization was selected by a panel of leadership from community and city organizations and Johns Hopkins as a model collaboration for creating and sustaining healthier communities. Safe Streets East is funded by the Baltimore City Health Department and was nominated by The Living Classrooms Foundation. Safe Streets East is a community mobilization and outreach program designed to combat shootings and homicides. Safe Streets Baltimore uses a unique, interdisciplinary, public health approach to violence prevention. They maintain that violence is a learned behavior that can be prevented using disease control methods. Safe Streets works to strengthen the community and provide opportunities for at-risk youth. Gardnel Carter, Violence Interrupters Coordinator, accepted the award on behalf of the organization, “We believe that every life is worth saving and every human being has the potential to change with the opportunity presented to them, regardless of what circumstances and violence they come out of”.

The runner up was also recognized at the event, Sisters Together and Reaching, a partnership with The Moore Clinic at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Henrietta Lacks was an East Baltimore resident and cervical cancer patient in the early 1950s at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, where cells taken from her tumor became the first “immortal” human cells grown in culture and led to breakthroughs in cell research related to cancer, AIDS, the effects of radiation and more. The Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award honors Mrs. Lacks and her family and is intended to be an enduring reminder of her contribution to medical science and to her community.

A video of the winning organization is available at:  
[http://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/henrietalacks\\_award/](http://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/henrietalacks_award/)

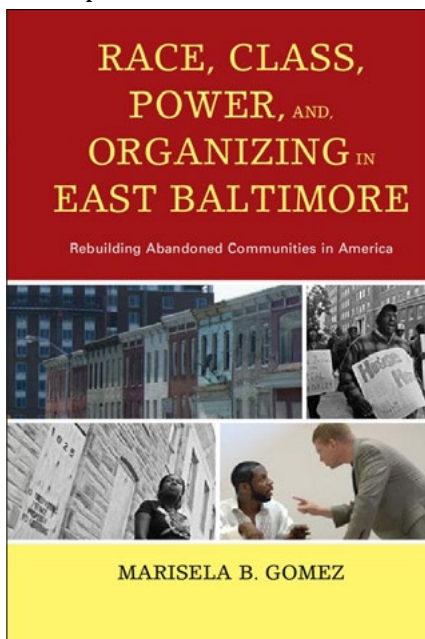


## BALTIMORE DIALOGUES: DR. MARISELA GOMEZ “RACE, CLASS, POWER AND ORGANIZING IN EAST BALTIMORE”

by Meron Solomon, Administrative Coordinator

The Urban Health Institute’s Baltimore Dialogues, formerly known as Baltimore Book Club, is a collaborative effort with Amazing Grace Lutheran Church in East Baltimore, to deeply explore themes concerning the city such as racism, classicism, social justice and politics. Baltimore Dialogues is an opportunity for open conversation between the communities of Baltimore and the university to engage in meaningful conversations with the invited author. While deeply digging into the text and topics, the author and attendees share a wide variety of knowledge, experience and individual expertise with one another.

On September 30th, the UHI invited Dr. Marisela Gomez, author of “Race, Class, Power and Organizing in East Baltimore: Rebuilding Abandoned Communities in America” to discuss her book and her experiences.



Dr. Gomez is a physician scientist who is well-known for being an activist and prominent advocate for the East Baltimore community. Her background experience consists of many years in the community during and after her education and professional training at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and School of Public Health.

With her rich personal experience and research on the East Baltimore community, Dr. Gomez facilitated the discussion by introducing the structure of the book as being divided into past, present, and future, as well as expounding on many of her research findings. She explained how the book was a real attempt to listen to the voice of the people negatively impacted by multiple factors in the community and that the book is simply a “vehicle” to communicate it back. Time was spent discussing the redevelopment efforts in East Baltimore and how they have negatively impacted some of the residents.

One attendee asked how to make the connections to bring the research that is available alive. In response, the author emphasized the importance of the individual and how the daily interactions are so vital in building and promoting behaviors that “connect beyond perceived borders”. Dr. Gomez added that “social justice is about being socially just everyday...it’s about listening and seeing each other in each other’s shoes”. It was further discussed that the book is not an end but the beginning of much needed and ongoing discus-



Dr. Marisela Gomez and Ernest Smith

sion. Moreover, Dr. Gomez mentioned that the book is not only a reference for the community to take advantage of but to also live out.

Baltimore Dialogues strives to not only be a stage for powerful conversation, but also to become a place where real strategies and ideas to combat issues, such as racism, can emerge. It is a platform for open discussion featuring authors of impactful books who not only facilitate the discussion but also engage with attendees on deep seeded issues that so often prevail in the community.

The Urban Health Institute thanks all of the individuals who attended and enriched the last conversation. The next Baltimore Dialogues discussion will feature Michael Higginbotham, author of “The Ghost of Jim Crow: Ending Racism in Post-Racial America”. It will be held on December 16, at 9:30 am at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church in East Baltimore.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

Date	Event	Location / Details
Monday, December 16, 2013 9:30am-11:00am	<b>Baltimore Dialogue with Michael Higgenbotham</b> Author of "Ghost of Jim Crow: Ending Racism in Post-Racial America"	Amazing Grace Lutheran Church Please RSVP on our website Contact: <a href="mailto:agawad@jhsph.edu">agawad@jhsph.edu</a> or 410-502-7473
Thursday, March 6, 2014 9:30am-11:00am	<b>Baltimore Dialogue with Dorothy Roberts</b> Author of "Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-first Century"	Amazing Grace Lutheran Church Please check our website for full details
Thursday, March 6, 2014	<b>Quarterly Symposia with Dorothy Roberts</b>	Please visit our website for full details
Monday, April 28, 2014	<b>Symposium on the Social Determinants of Health</b>	Please visit <a href="http://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/Social_Determinants_of_Health/">http://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/Social_Determinants_of_Health/</a> for full details
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Or contact [urbanhealth@jhsph.edu](mailto:urbanhealth@jhsph.edu)



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