

## Urban Health Institute Updates

### Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute Director Steps Down



After 13 years at the helm, **Robert Wm. Blum** officially stepped down as the director of the Urban Health Institute (UHI) on June 30th. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, our program director, **Amy Gawad**, assumed the role of interim executive director. Ms. Gawad joined the UHI as program director

in 2006. Prior to that, Amy was at the Institute of Medicine where she worked on several consensus reports for the Board on Children, Youth, and Families.

In 2006 Robert Blum—who at the time was chair of the Department of Population, Family, and Reproductive Health out of the Bloomberg School of Public Health—took on the role of interim director of the UHI and in 2007 was selected to lead and carry out the Urban Health Institute’s mission of strengthening and supporting university-community collaborations to improve the health and well-being of Baltimore city residents.

*“This is one of the greatest honors I have ever had to lead the Urban Health Institute and we are well poised for a terrific future.”*

The UHI is grateful to have had Dr. Blum leading us in many of our activities and initiatives, such as the

annual Social Determinants of Health Symposia, launching the Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Program, Community-Driven Research Day, Baltimore Dialogues, and our capacity-building workshops, to name just a few.

A steering committee, co-chaired by Joshua Sharfstein, vice dean for Public Health Practice and Community Engagement, and Lisa Cooper, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity, have been working to develop a plan of action for the future of the Urban Health Institute. We look forward to a new chapter and appreciate you, our friends, for being a part of the journey.

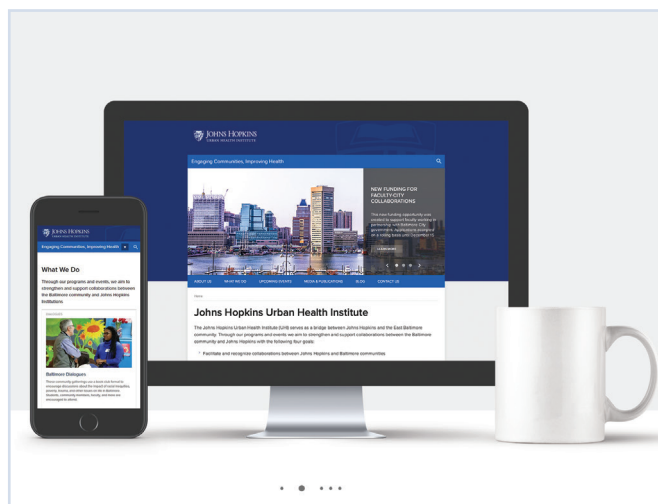
To read Dr. Blum’s farewell statement please visit [bit.ly/UHITransition](https://bit.ly/UHITransition). Catch a glimpse of his time here with the Urban Health Institute, by visiting [bit.ly/DrBlumMemories](https://bit.ly/DrBlumMemories).



Robert Wm. Blum with Congressman Elijah E. Cummings celebrating the 15th Anniversary of the Urban Health Institute

# New at the Urban Health Institute

## NEW WEBSITE!



We have experienced a lot of new and exciting changes here at the Urban Health Institute, including the re-branding of our website! In June, we launched our new and improved online presence designed with you, our friends, in mind. Our site now includes our recently launched initiatives, such as our [Strategic Consultation Grants](#), easy navigation, bright colors, and lots of pictures, capturing some of our favorite moments over the last few years.

Feel free to take a browse at [urbanhealth.jhu.edu](http://urbanhealth.jhu.edu) to check out the new features and updates. We hope you enjoy! You might even recognize a face a two.

## NEW PROGRAM LAUNCH!

### STRATEGIC CONSULTATION GRANTS FOR BALTIMORE CITY

This new funding opportunity was created to support faculty working in partnership with Baltimore City government. Funds are awarded to proposals that address requests from city government for assistance on specific projects that improve the health and well-being of Baltimore communities.

To learn more, please visit [bit.ly/UHIFunding](http://bit.ly/UHIFunding)



# Urban Health Institute Events!

To read full articles, please visit our blog [bit.ly/UHIBlog](http://bit.ly/UHIBlog)

We have hosted and co-sponsored several community-university events the past few months. Learn about a few of them below!

## 2019 HENRIETTA LACKS MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER: MERIT HEALTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

On October 5<sup>th</sup>, the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute presented their annual Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award to MERIT Health Leadership Academy. Working collaboratively with Johns Hopkins Medicine, MERIT educates, mentors, and provides resources to students from across Baltimore City to enter the field of medicine.

*“MERIT’s mission is to educate and empower students from underrepresented backgrounds to become health care professionals and change agents, equipped to advance equity.”*  
**Devin Harris, MERIT’s 2021 class president**

With efforts led by Jake Weinfeld, MERIT executive director, Dr. Sherita Golden, Vice President and Chief Diversity officer of Johns Hopkins Medicine, Dr. David Hellman Vice Dean and Chairman, Department of Medicine of Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, and a dedicated team of community and Hopkins experts, students are connected and exposed to the endless possibilities they can explore in medicine, STEM, and community health.

The group plans to use the \$15,000 award to expand its impact by increasing the students they serve from 94 to 225 scholars in the 2019-2020 academic year. In addition, the award will also deepen their



Pictured here are Dr. Sherita Golden, MERIT Board member and granddaughter of Henrietta Lacks, Gerri Lacks, with MERIT students and leaders.

programming so that they can empower their scholars to work as health leaders in their communities.

To learn more about the MERIT Health Leadership Academy, visit our YouTube channel, [bit.ly/2019HLMA](http://bit.ly/2019HLMA), to watch the official Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award video.

*\* The Urban Health Institute would also like to congratulate our runner ups for the 2019 Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award. **Shepherd’s Clinic** and **Sisters Together and Reaching, Inc. (STAR)** both received a \$2,500 award for their ongoing collaborations with Johns Hopkins.*

## SCHOOLS, PRISONS, AND CONCENTRATED POVERTY!

“We’re not going to criminalize children because they’re having a bad day,” said Akil Hamm, chief of the school police force.

On October 3<sup>rd</sup>, educators, community organizers, politicians, and community leaders from Baltimore and beyond convened in Levering Hall to confront and tackle issues, such as systematic racism, poverty, and school policing, that are impacting youth in Baltimore City.

The efforts were led by the Urban Health Institute’s associate director, Richard Lofton, PhD in partnership with the Johns Hopkins School of Education and the Baltimore City Office of Civil Rights.

Panelists included teachers, social workers, school resource officers, professors, and more. Many of them coming from as near as North East Baltimore to as far as California. While everyone brought different solutions, observations, and their experiences working with youth to the table, many shared similar sentiments about creating a safe and healthy



L to R: Richard Lofton, D. Watkins, Tina Hike-Hubbard, Tisha Edwards, Jeffrey M. Robinson, and Rebecca Jones-Gaston

environment for youth of Baltimore and working collectively as a community to ensure Baltimore City students were receiving the highest quality learning experience. You can read more about the day’s events at Johns Hopkins official news center, the Hub, by visiting [bit.ly/SchoolsPrisonsPoverty](http://bit.ly/SchoolsPrisonsPoverty)

## HOW COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE THRIVE!

On May 13<sup>th</sup>, the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute and Office of the Provost hosted its eighth annual Social Determinants of Health Symposium. This year’s theme was focused on how communities and people thrive. Discussions throughout the day took on a life-course approach by analyzing barriers to, and achievements in, health from infants and children to adults and seniors.

Keynote speaker Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones kicked off the Symposium discussing the importance of health equity, shared the barriers that cause health disparities, and provided

solutions that can help eliminate those disparities and achieve health equity for all.

Through her example of the metaphorical cliff, Dr. Jones went on to pinpoint racism and poverty as two major barriers to sustained improvements to health outcomes.

“We must be about moving the population away from the cliff by addressing poverty, adverse neighborhood conditions and the like [...] we must address racism, sexism, and capitalism if we want to achieve social justice and eliminate health disparities.”

Housing commissioner Michael Braverman spoke during the

Healthy Communities’ panel discussion and touched on the value of understanding racism, its history, and how it affects the housing structure in Baltimore.

“We need to start from a place of understanding slavery and institutionalized racism and how it plays out in Baltimore city, how it is woven into the fabric of present day, and how we make sure it doesn’t define the future.”

Led by James Piper Bond, the Healthy Communities’ panel also included Pastor Gary Dittman of Amazing Grace Church and Dr. Joel Gittelsohn of Johns Hopkins University.

“The community is screaming we just aren’t listening to what they are saying [...] they are the experts on determining what will make life better. Any programming that happens should come from the community”, explained Pastor Gary Dittman.

Rebecca Dineen sparked off the discussion on the Infants, Children, and Families panel. Sharing the impact racism and segregation have on current communities in Baltimore City, also known as the “White L” and “Black Butterfly.” Sharing the difference between the “White L” and “Black Butterfly”, Ms. Dineen acknowledged that in white communities there are low crimes, poverty, and some wealth while in Black communities, also known as the “Black Butterfly,” you see high poverty, high infant mortality, high crime, and low life expectancy.

“Where you are born in the city ultimately determines your life course and these acts didn’t develop by accident [...] racial residential segregation is hard wired in Baltimore and deliberate political action created this”, said Ms. Dineen.

Joined by Professor Anne Duggan, Debbie Rock, and Danitza Simpson-Escano, the conversation included messages about looking



L to R: Rebecca Dineen, Anne Duggan, Debbie Rock, and Danitza Simpson-Escano

beyond the health of a child and analyzing the overall health of the family and environment in which the child is birthed in; and eliminating stressors that contribute to the health and well-being of infants, children, and youth — such as poverty.

*“Our goal should be helping families to break multi-generational poverty [...] that means just because grandma started off on welfare doesn’t mean her adult child or grandchild has to continue it. We can help that cycle be broken.”*

**Debbie Rock**

Sarah Hemminger, Joni Holifield, Tamar Mendelson, and Dana Stein spoke on the Adolescent and Youth panel. During the discussion, panelists shared their experiences working face to face with youth in the community and what they’ve learned works and did not work.

“Do you know how frustrating it must feel? To see the playing field, know that you can play on it, but you can’t get in the game?”, said Joseph T. Jones, Jr., founder of the Center for Urban Families, as he kicked off the Adult and Seniors panel with Dr. Michelle Carlson, Dr. Sarah Szanton, and Melvin Wilson. Panelists expressed the importance of empowering adults and seniors economically through job security and opportunity and passing legislation that equip adults and seniors to thrive in their communities.



L to R: Robert Wm. Blum, Robert C. Embry Jr., Lisa Hamilton, and Shanaysha Sauls

Melvin Wilson of TurnAround Tuesday expanded the conversation about meeting people where they are. “As a society, we continue to punish people after they’ve already done their time [...] we have a lot of challenges in Baltimore, but all of us have to come together to do the work. All of us are just one incident away from our lives changing forever.”

The Philanthropy panel closed out the day. Baltimore foundation leaders — Robert Embry, Lisa Hamilton, and Shanaysha Sauls — gathered to discuss the commitment of philanthropists in Baltimore city and shared how their involvement often goes beyond providing funding but also involves community engagement, meaningful dialogue, and gathering data to help inform institutions on what is happening in the community.

“It’s important for us to align our strategies, continue to be in conversation with one another, and complement one another as members of the philanthropic institutions of Baltimore. We each bring different sets of knowledge to bare in the conversation [...] we become a virtuous circle with the people being in the middle.”

To view photos from the May 13<sup>th</sup> Social Determinants of Health Symposium please visit our Facebook page [bit.ly/SDH-2019](http://bit.ly/SDH-2019)

## 4TH ANNUAL LATINX HEALTH CONFERENCE

On March 19<sup>th</sup>, community and religious leaders, educators, health professionals, and students gathered at Sacred Heart for the Johns Hopkins Centro SOL's 4th Annual Latinx Health Conference "Mind Your Health: Community-Centered Solutions to Mental Health Issues".

*"Diversity without voice leads to bad science"*

**David Hayes-Bautista**

Keynote speakers Margarita Alegria and David Hayes-Bautista both shared their perspectives on mental health disparities in the Latinx community. Dr.

Alegria, Chief of the Disparities Research Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital discussed the role of feasible and sustainable community-based interventions. Dr. Hayes-Bautista, Director of the Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture at UCLA's School of Medicine, spoke about the impact of demographic shifts in mental health outcomes.

Attendees also had the chance to walk through a photo exhibit, Portraits of the Journey, by Tomas Ayuso, listen to spoken word, hear personal testimonies from latinx advocates and trauma survivors, and reflect with one another about the information and data shared



David Hayes-Bautista, presenting at the Latinx Health Conference.

from health experts and their own personal experiences in the fight to end disparities amongst latinx. To learn more about the conference, please visit [bit.ly/JHLatinx](http://bit.ly/JHLatinx)

## Urban Health Institute Spotlights

### SMALL GRANT SPOTLIGHT: A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN RESEARCH APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IN BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*\*This post is a summarized version. To read the full article, please visit our blog [bit.ly/UHIBlog](http://bit.ly/UHIBlog)*

Every year the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute provides funding to community-university—graduate, faculty, and undergraduate—partnerships that most successfully demonstrate the potential for advancing the health and well-being of the residents of Baltimore.

In 2017, Arshdeep Kaur and Madison Dutson, at the time undergrad students at Johns Hopkins, and Shane Gordon became recipients of UHI's Small Grant Award following their participation in our Community-Driven Research Day for their partnership and work with Cool Green Schools in Baltimore City. Below is a blog Arshdeep and Madison wrote about the on-going collaboration. Read the project abstract here [bit.ly/2017CommunityGrant](http://bit.ly/2017CommunityGrant).

**By Arshdeep Kaur and Madison Dutson, Johns Hopkins University**

Poor air quality, a host of asthma triggers, and inadequate maintenance threaten students' health and interfere with their learning. Tackling this problem requires an innovative, community-driven, and sustainable approach.



Student participants

Our research aims to address this need through community partnerships and a focus on youth empowerment in order to bring about lasting change. Rooted in the belief that students are the experts in their own lives, this program empowers young people to study, understand, and change the world around them. This is the central value of a community-

driven approach—allowing researchers to support those who are affected by public health issues to find solutions that are relevant and effective.

The idea for our project began in March 2017 when Madison Dutson and Arshdeep Kaur, two Johns Hopkins University undergraduate students, and Dr. Megan Latshaw of the Bloomberg School of Public Health, partnered with Cool Green Schools. The community research partnership with this local non-profit, led by Shan Gordon, was funded by the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute.

The project began in spring 2018. Students at Patterson High School and Baltimore Polytechnic Institute received an introduction to the principles of environmental health and took part in a building audit led by mechanical engineer Keith Madigan. Using their understanding of environmental health and the conditions at their school, students identified the environmental health issues that mattered most to them. With guidance from Johns Hopkins students, they designed and carried out research projects and



Student participant

interventions to address their chosen issues. Students quickly took to the task, creating projects ranging from a flower cart to improve classmates' mental health to placing mini-basketball hoops over trash cans to encourage their classmates to "make a trashket" instead of littering. Other groups studied temperature and air quality differences throughout their school building or tested water quality in the bathrooms. All their projects displayed students' creativity, enthusiasm, and commitment to making their school a better place.

### BUNTING NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP FELLOW SPOTLIGHT! JONATHAN MOORE

2018 Bunting Fellow, Jonathan Moore, sat down with Restoring the Village Radio to talk about his partnership with PiKaso and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to bring community owned Wi-Fi to Baltimore neighborhoods, starting in the Sandtown-Winchester community.

Visit [bit.ly/JonathanMooreInterview](http://bit.ly/JonathanMooreInterview) to learn more about this amazing collaboration and how Jonathan's experience with the Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Program has helped push his work forward.



## TEAM NEWS: MEET ZOLA! UHI 2019 SUMMER INTERN



Imani West and Zola Purville

This summer we had the opportunity to participate in the Johns Hopkins Summer Job Program. 480 Baltimore City Youth interned at Johns Hopkins University and Hospital and Zola was one of those special students we had the honor to have on our team assisting with several communications and marketing efforts.

We are so grateful for all the great work Zola did during her time with us and appreciate Johns Hopkins Institution for providing various centers and departments with the opportunity to help increase employment among our youth. Get to know more about Zola below!

Zola Purville is a 10th grade student at Baltimore City College, where she is an active member of the varsity soccer and tennis teams, school choir, and Medical Minds Club. Zola sees a future here at Johns Hopkins and aspires to enter the field of medicine as a trauma surgeon. Born in Manhattan, New York, Zola has called Baltimore home since the age of seven.

## UPCOMING EVENTS!

\* To learn more about our upcoming events, please visit our website:

[www.urbanhealth.jhu.edu/UHlevents](http://www.urbanhealth.jhu.edu/UHlevents)

## SAVE THE DATE! SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH SYMPOSIUM

April 27th, 2020



Engaging communities  
Improving health

The Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute (UHI) serves as a bridge between Johns Hopkins University and the East Baltimore community. Our mission is to strengthen and support university-community collaborations to improve the health and well-being of Baltimore City residents.

