



Seth Dvorin, LC'02, Was Killed in Battle in Iraq; Distinguished Young Alumni Award Named for Him

U.S. Army Lt. **Seth Jeremy Dvorin**, a 2002 graduate of Livingston College at Rutgers University, was killed in battle near Iskandariyah, Iraq, on Feb. 3, 2004. 

An improvised explosive device (IED) killed Dvorin, age 24, while he was conducting counter-IED operations.


In 2004, Rutgers' Livingston Alumni Association created the Seth Dvorin Distinguished Young Alumni Award in his honor.

Dvorin had been assigned to Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 62nd Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 10th Mountain Division, based at Fort Drum, New York.

 Dvorin's sister, Rebekah, told The Associated Press that the Army informed her that "Seth's unit had been ordered to clear the area of the homemade mines and bombs that have killed dozens of troops. ... They were in a convoy and saw something in the road. My brother, the hero, told his driver to stop. That's when the bomb detonated, when they were trying to dismantle it."

Dvorin earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Administration of Justice from Livingston College in 2002. Born in Freehold, New Jersey, he grew up in East Brunswick and South Brunswick, New Jersey. He graduated from South Brunswick High School, where he played football and baseball.

Dvorin traveled extensively, including to Europe and Israel. He loved animals and cars, especially Mustangs, and was an excellent cook. He had lived in Evans Mills, New York, at the time of his death.

Dvorin was posthumously awarded a Bronze Star for valor. He was buried in Marlboro Memorial Cemetery, Monmouth County, New Jersey. 

Surviving Dvorin were his wife, Kelly Harris Dvorin, whom he married on August 26, 2003, five days before leaving for Iraq; his mother, Sue Niederer, and her husband Greg; his father, Richard Dvorin, and his companion Ellen Sutton; his sister, Rebekah Dvorin, and her then-fiance, Walter Gruszka; his stepbrother, Joshua Dvorin; his paternal grandmother, Ruth Dvorin; his maternal grandfather, Jacob Sapir; and his uncles Gary Sapir and Howard Dvorin.

Dvorin's mother, Sue Niederer, has protested the Bush Administration for the US involvement in Iraq, and criticized Donald J. Trump for his insensitivity to Gold Star families who have lost family members in battle.


As of 2018 she continues to speak on behalf of the GI Go Fund, a national nonprofit organization that helps veterans find employment and secure education and health care benefits, and provides assistance to low-income and homeless veterans, according to a May 26, 2018, article from *My Central Jersey*. Friends of Dvorin founded the GI Go Fund in 2006.

Seth Dvorin's father, Richard Dvorin, a U.S. Air Force veteran, worked through his grief by volunteering for a phone hotline for veterans and their families.


Richard Dvorin also served as Past Commander for the Lt. Seth Dvorin Jewish War Veterans Post #972 in Marlboro, New Jersey, renamed for his son in 2004. Richard Dvorin died in 2013.

Photos: Seth Dvorin; Dvorin with his mother, Sue Niederer; Dvorin with his wife, Kelly Dvorin.

'Intimate' Vocalist Jeanie Bryson, LC'81, Inspired by Rutgers' Jazz Department; Honored as a Distinguished Alumna in 2018

Jeanie Bryson, a 1981 graduate of Livingston College at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, is a vocalist of jazz, pop and Latin songs whose style has been described as "intimate." 

On March 20, 2018, the Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) honored Bryson with the Livingston College Distinguished Alumni Award. Bryson and five other exceptional graduates of Livingston College were honored at an [awards celebration](#) at Rutgers.

 A "world-class jazz department" at Rutgers and one of her professors, Kenny Barron, inspired in her a love of jazz singing, Bryson noted on her website.

She has also been greatly influenced by her parents, the songwriter Connie Bryson and the late jazz trumpeter-singer-composer Dizzy Gillespie.

For Gillespie's 90th birthday in 2007 (he had died in 1993) Bryson created and performed a concert tribute, The Dizzy Songbook, which played at the Guinness Jazz Festival and toured.

Bryson had met Barron when he was playing piano in Gillespie's band in the early 1960s. Their paths crossed again at Rutgers, when Bryson took his keyboard harmony class.

In an interview for the 2018 Livingston College Distinguished Alumni Award, Bryson says that Livingston College was "my kind of place. It was a little more relaxed, a little more unorthodox ... It was a really eclectic musical experience. You know, I ended up becoming a jazz singer, and of course the jazz department at Rutgers was also one of the best in this country and the world at the time.

"I got a great deal of wonderful listening experience, meeting musicians at school that ended up being, you know, really world-class players. They were my classmates so I got to play with them then and even as an adult I did records with some of the people that I went to school with. I couldn't have picked a better place to go to school than Livingston."

Bryson studied anthropology at Rutgers (and minored in ethnomusicology). She intended to go to law school, but was drawn to music, she noted in a 2008 interview with *The Mercury* of Pottstown, Pennsylvania.

"I really have no other skills aside from music," Bryson told the music writer Ed Condran. "So it was kind of inevitable for me. I didn't realize it until I was in my 20s. My parents did what they loved, which was music. It was my turn to do what I love, which is music as well. It runs in the family."

✖ She left her day job in 1987 to sing full time. In 1996, music writer Peter Watrous noted the "conversational level" of her performance at the Village Vanguard.

"She never raises her voice or adds details when clarity works better. And the effect is intimacy," Watrous wrote in *The New York Times*. "She has created a performance language rare in its ability to portray desire and humor as a part of everyday life."

Having performed and travelled extensively throughout North and South America, Europe, Israel and Japan, Bryson has received international acclaim. Along with being a guest vocalist on several outstanding recordings over the years, Bryson has multiple solo albums to her credit.

Bryson's relationship with Gillespie was complicated by the fact that he had fathered her out of wedlock, and didn't acknowledge their relationship publicly although he supported her privately. In the 1980s Gillespie came to hear her sing in New York, where he reportedly said, "Man, she sounds just like me." The saxophonist Stan Getz, who was also in the audience, said Bryson sounds more like the trumpeter Miles Davis, and she agrees. ✖

"Our musical styles were about as different as they could be," Bryson said in a 2018 interview with *Fatherly*. "My father's trademark was playing faster and

higher than any other trumpet player had ever played before. Nobody had ever heard anybody play like that. His lightning speed and his dexterity were in the stratosphere.

“My style is very dark. You couldn’t find anybody that would be any different than Dizzy’s and my voice.”

Bryson is working on a book about her memories with her father.

Bryson’s husband, the jazz guitarist, singer and songwriter Coleman (Coley) Mellett, died in a plane crash in 2009. He had been traveling north to play with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra as a longtime member of the Chuck Mangione band. The loss of her husband was devastating – Mellett and Bryson had been together since 1996, when he became a member of her touring band. Their everyday lives and their musical careers were completely entwined – traveling the world together for years.

One way of keeping her husband’s memory and his legacy alive has been producing a documentary about Mellett and the original songs that were left behind – on his computer in his music studio – music that Grammy-award winning producer Barry Miles saw to it was finished with the contributions of some of the world’s most acclaimed musicians, including James Taylor, Chuck Mangione, and Michael McDonald.

The film, titled “Sing You a Brand New Song: The Words and Music of Coleman Mellett,” had its premiere at the New Jersey International Film Festival on June 8, 2019, at Rutgers. “Sing You a Brand New Song” was named as the festival’s best documentary film. Bryson and her co-producers also plan to release a companion CD.

Photos (from top): Courtesy of Jeanie Bryson; Album covers (clockwise from top left): “Deja Blue,” “Some Cats Know: Jeanie Bryson Sings Songs of Peggy Lee,” “I Love Being Here With You” and “Tonight I Need You So”; With Dizzy Gillespie; With Coleman Mellett in 2007.

Video: Bryson singing Irving Berlin’s Change Partners (4 minutes, 25 seconds).

[Carlyle E. Shelton Jr., LC’80, Is Deputy Inspector General of the US](#)

Marine Corps; Honored as a Distinguished Alumnus in 2018


Carlyle E. (Carl) Shelton Jr., a 1980 graduate of Livingston College at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, and is currently the Deputy Inspector General of the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) since January 2009.



Shelton and five other exceptional graduates of Livingston College were honored at an awards celebration on Tuesday, March 20, 2018, at Rutgers.

During his course of studies at Livingston College, Shelton was nominated for a Congressional internship in Washington, D.C. He served as an Aide to Congressman Nicholas Mavroules (D-Mass.) from 1979-80. Upon graduation from Livingston College, Shelton was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the USMC in June 1980.

Shelton's 30-year career as a Marine infantry officer spans 61 countries, two wars, the Los Angeles riots, and humanitarian and disaster relief operations at home and abroad. His vast array of assignments includes command at the platoon, company and battalion levels.

 He was a Detachment Commander aboard the aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy (responsible for nuclear weapons security), Operations Officer for 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine, a Special Operations designated Battalion Landing Team (BLT 3/1), Instructor at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Head of Land Warfare at the Naval Doctrine Command, Commander of the Marine Scout Sniper School, Camp Lejeune, Security Battalion Commander, Camp Pendleton, and Director, Investigations and Assistance for the Inspector General of the Marine Corps, to mention a few of the assignments Shelton served with distinction.

Currently, Shelton is the most senior civilian authority within the Office of Inspector General of the Marine Corps (IGMC). The IGMC promotes Marine Corps combat readiness, institutional integrity, effectiveness, discipline and credibility, through impartial and independent inspections, assessments, inquiries, investigations and training. Shelton reports to the Secretary of the Navy for Marine Corps matters and assists the Commandant of the Marine Corps with his constitutional responsibility to organize, train and equip Marine forces for worldwide deployments.


Shelton's functional duties includes the conduct of comprehensive unit inspections throughout the Marine Corps, oversight of all investigations of fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement and misconduct; to include investigations of senior ranking officials.

He maintains oversight of intelligence programs to include special access programs and other sensitive activities in support of national security

missions conducted by naval forces.

Shelton had previously served as Director of Investigations and Assistance in the IGMC from September 2006 through January 2009, and is certified by the Association of Inspectors General.


His personal accolades include the Department of Defense Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal (with four Gold Stars), Navy Commendation Medal, Navy Achievement Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, and numerous unit citations and medals.

 His civilian recognitions include the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force for North County, California. He was also recognized by the Emergency Managers of Southern California for Department of Homeland Security, Advance Team Presidential Security, and numerous other recognitions.

At Livingston College he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science. In 2003 he earned a master's degree in National Security Strategy from National War College.

Photos courtesy of Carlyle E. Shelton Jr. Center: With former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Bottom: Shelton, serving as the representative of the office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, presents a folded American flag to Jacqueline Mackin-Hartman, the daughter of retired Col. Alvin Mackin, at Arlington National Cemetery in 2010.

[Distinguished Alumna Staci Berger, LC'94, Is an Activist Supporting Affordable Homes and Community Development](#)

Staci Berger, a 1994 graduate of Livingston College at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, leads a statewide association which supports the creation of affordable homes and community development in New Jersey. 

In 2018 the Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) honored Berger with the Livingston College Distinguished Alumni Award, for her activism and work to advance justice. Berger and five other exceptional graduates of Livingston College were honored at an awards celebration on Tuesday, March 20 at Rutgers.

She received her master's degree in Public Affairs and Politics from Rutgers

University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy and Graduate School-New Brunswick in 2004. In 2017 the Bloustein School honored Berger with a Career Achievement Award.

In the 1993 Livingston College yearbook, Berger wrote: "In the year 2003, I will be working on the same things I am working for here at Livingston: justice and equality for all. Education, at Livingston and Rutgers, is just one issue I have spent my time here fighting for. The next ten years, and probably for the rest of my life, will be dedicated to people and their right to live free."

In an interview for the 2018 Livingston College Distinguished Alumni Award, Berger notes: "I graduated a little bit later than my incoming class. Twenty of us were suspended for taking over Bishop House in an effort to get the university to not increase tuition. We were disciplined both in the university and in the justice system for standing up for what we believed in. And that is integral to the Livingston experience."

As the President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey (HCDNNJ), Berger directs this association of more than 150 community-based development organizations.

HCDNNJ was created in 1989 to enhance the efforts of these groups to create affordable homes and revitalize their communities, and to improve the climate for community development in New Jersey.


Before becoming the President and CEO, Berger served as the Director of Advocacy and Policy. In this role she was responsible for leading the community development policy staff team, including working with the policy coordinator and field organizers, to broaden and mobilize support for the network's public policy agenda.



Representing the HCDNNJ on Community Reinvestment Act Advisory Boards for both PNC Bank and Valley National Bank, and on TD Bank's Leadership Council, Berger assists these institutions in meeting their community investment objectives.

She has made multiple appearances on national media outlets, including MSNBC, NPR, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, and is a recognized expert on housing and community development issues sought by national, regional and local press.

Prior to joining the HCDNNJ, Berger worked for nine years with New Jersey Citizen Action (NJCA) where she went from being an organizer to the Political and Legislative Director. As the Political and Legislative Director, she devised and implemented political, legislative, and electoral strategy for the state's largest nonprofit, non-partisan independent watchdog coalition. She continues to serve on the NJCA's Board of Directors.

 Berger serves on the Economic and Community Advisory Council of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia and is a member of the Housing Advisory

Council for the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York.

She additionally has served as an associate trainer for the Midwest Academy, a leading national training institute for the progressive movement, and worked as a labor organizer with the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute and the Health Professionals and Allied Employees/AFT/AFL-CIO.

Berger's professional milestones and honors include:

- Inaugural recipient of the Center for Non-Profits' Emerging Leader Award in 2013.
- Community Service Award from New Jersey Citizen Action in 2014.
- Recognition as a Change Maker by the New Jersey General Assembly during Women's History Month in 2016.
- Career Achievement Award from Rutgers' Bloustein School of Public Policy in 2017.
- Golden Rose Award for Advocacy from the Rose House in 2017.

Berger, a Massachusetts native, lives with her husband and two sons in Piscataway, New Jersey, where she is involved in volunteer efforts to improve her own community and advance social, political and economic justice. She served as President of the Martin Luther King Intermediate Elementary School Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) from 2012 to 2014, and continues to serve as the PTO Vice President of Conackamack Middle School.

Berger has been involved in multiple, successful electoral campaigns to make the Board of Education responsive to and reflective of the needs of the school community. She helped advance school policy changes to win smaller class sizes, secure food justice, and protect the rights of all students regardless of documentation status or gender identity.

In 2016, she led the founding of the Central Jersey Progressive Democrats, and ran a campaign to elect more than 100 area residents for office in June 2017.

Her efforts led to a civil rights victory in Piscataway. On December 19, 2017, the Piscataway Township Council attempted to keep Berger from videotaping a council meeting based on a township ordinance.


On December 27, 2017, the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey advised the township that the law allows citizens to videotape meetings. Three days later the township announced that it would revise its ordinance to permit videorecording of its meetings, and in the interim would not enforce its old ordinance prohibiting such recordings.

Berger was a speaker at the 2017 New Jersey Congressional Reception, focusing on housing issues. She tells the audience: "We can't just build homes, we have to also build movements. ... Right now every single person needs to be involved in the fight for justice, because nobody else is going to do it for us" The conclusion of her speech was drowned out by applause.

Follow Staci Berger on Twitter.


Photos, from top: Courtesy of Staci Berger; With fellow student Betty Chan in the 1993 Livingston College yearbook, Diversity: A Higher Form of Education; With New Jersey Assemblyman Jerry Green.

Jayceryll de Chavez, LC'99, Was Driven to Leave His Mark; Remembered with Dedication at Rutgers Business School Building

On October 20, 2017, Rutgers Business School dedicated the South Tower of its building on the Livingston Campus to Jayceryll Malabuyoc de Chavez, an  alumnus who died during the 9/11 terrorist attack at the World Trade Center.

More than 100 guests assembled in the tower's foyer in front of a new plaque inscribed with details of de Chavez's life, a photo taken at his graduation, and a portion of a steel beam from the ruins of the World Trade Center.

As a Livingston College student, de Chavez studied finance and economics. He was working as a portfolio analyst at Franklin Templeton's offices on the 95th floor of the World Trade Center's South Tower on September 11, 2001.

 He had graduated in 1999 from Rutgers' Livingston College and the Rutgers School of Business-New Brunswick.

De Chavez was a distinguished scholar who started two fraternities, Delta Chi and Alpha Kappa Psi, while he was at Rutgers.

Friends said that de Chavez, an immigrant from the Philippines, appreciated everything and was driven to succeed and to leave his mark.

A conference room and four reading rooms at the Carr Library, also on Livingston Campus, are named after de Chavez, and his family has created a \$1 million endowed scholarship and endowed excellence fund in his memory.

The professional business fraternity Alpha Kappa Psi also awards a scholarship in his name.

Read more about de Chavez in a Rutgers Business School article on the 2017 South Tower dedication, by Susan Todd.

Top photo by Lauren Guiliano, courtesy of Rutgers Business School.

Photo collage (clockwise from bottom left): Sign outside the conference room at Carr Library's ground (basement) level; de Chavez's portrait, plaque (see below), and furnishings inside the conference room; one of the four study rooms in his honor on the library's second floor.



Top plaque: Every man believes in certain ideologies and life philosophies, it should be marked that Jayceryll M. de Chavez stood believing: "Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken-threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue." (Sir Henry James).

Bottom plaque: Alpha Kappa Psi Study Room 4 Donated in Loving Memory of Jacy M. De Chavez and Victims of 9/11.

Distinguished Alumnus Robert Snyder, LC'77, Is a Leading Historian of New York City; Learned 'Tough-Minded Idealism' at Livingston College

Robert W. Snyder, a 1977 graduate of Livingston College at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, is a Professor of Journalism and American Studies at Rutgers-Newark. He writes widely on New York City history and journalism.



Snyder graduated from Livingston College with majors in History and Urban Communications (Journalism). He earned a doctorate in American History at New York University.

In 2018, the Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) honored Snyder with the Livingston College Distinguished Alumni Award, for his work as a scholar and historian, and for his unflagging efforts to recognize and celebrate the history of Livingston College.

Snyder and five other exceptional graduates of Livingston College were honored at an awards celebration on Tuesday, March 20, 2018, at Rutgers.

He has a very strong record of teaching, scholarship, journalism, museum work, and publication, and has received high recognition for the quality of his projects and his commitment. From 2000 to 2005 he served as director of the




Journalism program in Rutgers-Newark's Department of Arts, Culture and Media, and from 2009 to 2014 as director of the graduate program in American Studies.

In addition to teaching at Rutgers-Newark and elsewhere, Snyder has worked as journalist, a journal editor, and a documentarian. He has carried out projects with journalists, museum curators, and documentarians to share history with a broad public. He has written widely and lectured on New York City history, oral history, workers, the media, painting and the arts, and other topics.


He is the author of *Crossing Broadway: Washington Heights and the Promise of New York City*; *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York*; and *Transit Talk: New York's Bus and Subway Workers Tell Their Stories*.

He is the co-author of *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York*, which won the Barr Prize of the College Art Association. With Rebecca Zurier, he co-curated an Ashcan Artists exhibit of the same name the exhibit at the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. He served as a consultant to the Museum of the City of New York for exhibits on the Spanish Civil War and New York City, the mayoralty of John V. Lindsay, and the cartoons of Denys Wortman. With the Newark Museum, he has developed educational programs for teachers and the general public.

 Snyder wrote, produced and directed the documentary short *City Kids Meet Ashcan Art*, which won a Gold Apple from the National Educational Media Network. He directed the research for Ric Burns' film *New York* and served as a consultant and interview source for National Public Radio's Sonic Memorial project on September 11 and the World Trade Center, which won the Peabody Award.

Formerly the editor of *Media Studies Journal*, Snyder also worked at Channel 13/WNET, *Newsday*, the journalism review *More*, and the *Tarrytown Daily News*.

At *Newsday* he was a member of a special projects team that explored immigration and ethnic and racial diversity in New York City. Snyder also provided expert commentary about Depression-era New York City for the DVD version of Peter Jackson's film "King Kong."

His reviews and articles have been published in scholarly journals such as the *Journal of Urban History*, *Journal of American History*, *Journalism and Reviews in American History*, and in general interest publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, the *Columbia Journalism Review*, the Jesuit magazine *America*, the *Jewish Forward*, and *The Star-Ledger*. 

He has been interviewed by *The New York Times*, National Public Radio, WNJN, the History Channel, and the BBC on history, urban affairs, and media issues.

In 2015-2016 Snyder served as a Fulbright Scholar, teaching an American studies course called "America the Visual: Conflict, Diversity and Democracy in American Culture" at the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in South Korea.

"This was a version of a course that I've experimented with at Rutgers-Newark," Snyder said. "It examines visual expression in culture that look at conflicts. We look at how artists, photographers, TV producers, journalists have presented defining conflicts in American culture. Some of the most interesting sessions came from comparing Korean and American attitudes toward shared experiences."

Snyder has remained active in the LAA and maintained strong connections with many students from his days on campus. Most important, he has remained committed to the ideals of the college. In later 2012 and early 2013 he recorded a three-part interview with the Rutgers Oral History Archives (ROHA), talking at great length about his experiences at Livingston College. At his 40-year Rutgers reunion, Snyder encouraged his classmates to contribute their stories to the ROHA as well.

And in 2010, he was one of the panelists at the LAA's discussion on the history and impact of the Department of Journalism and Urban Communications and journalism programs at Livingston College and the School of Communication and Information.

As a journalism and history major in the 1970s, Snyder embodied the social action and justice aspects of Livingston's mission. He was active in student politics as a leading reporter and editor on the *Livingston Medium* and gave a rousing speech on commencement day in the spring of 1977 where he encouraged students "to be proud" of their years at Livingston. When it came time to speak out and act to preserve Livingston's mission in the face of changes at Rutgers University, Snyder worked tirelessly to convince the administration to preserve Livingston's mission of social justice and inclusion.

Snyder's passion for Livingston burns deep to this day, highlighted by a blog article he wrote after attending an on-campus program dedicated to preserving Livingston's history and impact on the overall Rutgers University community and the world. Even though he went on to do graduate work at New York University and teach at Princeton University, Snyder remained loyal to Livingston College. He says it was at Livingston where he first actively engaged in politics and journalism in a way that helped chart a course for the rest of his life.

The college's diverse population instilled in him a "tough-minded idealism" that he has carried with him since then. Livingston gave him exposure to people from all walks of life, an experience he would not have received at most other universities or even at the other campuses at Rutgers, most of which were generally more homogeneous.

In his book *Crossing Broadway*, Snyder writes that several factors played into the recovery of Washington Heights, including "local activists – overcoming both ethnic separation and the limitations of local economic resources – to collectively deliver Washington Heights from violence and decay."


His colleague Jan Ellen Lewis, Dean of Faculty and Professor of History at Rutgers-Newark, praised *Crossing Broadway* as "a model of how a writer can

incorporate personal reminiscences, family history, and scholarship into a work that is both accessible and valuable for scholars and a general audience. ... I should also note that Rob's service, scholarship, and teaching all inform each other, and it is impossible to draw sharp lines separating these categories.

"He is a citizen-scholar, not only one of the leading historians of New York City writing today, but also a major presence in public history, urban history, and American studies as well as the history of journalism."


Photos, from top: Courtesy of Robert Snyder; From the 1977 Livingston College yearbook, The Rock; Panelists Roger Cohen, Jim Simon and Rob Snyder speaking on Livingston College's journalism legacy in 2010; Snyder in his Rutgers-Newark classroom.

Distinguished Alumnus Everette Penn, LC'91, Is Transforming the Relationship Between Youth and Law Enforcement

Dr. Everette B. Penn, a 1991 graduate of Livingston College at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, is working to transform the relationship between youth and law enforcement. 

In 2018, the Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) honored Penn with the Livingston College Distinguished Alumni Award, for his work as a scholar and advocate on issues of criminology, as well as race, youth and justice. Penn and five other exceptional graduates of Livingston College was honored at an awards celebration on Tuesday, March 20 at Rutgers.

In 2011, Penn co-founded the Teen and Police Service (TAPS) Academy in Houston, Texas, and continues to serve as its principal investigator. TAPS uses evidence-based results to reduce the social distance between youth, law enforcement and their communities.

 TAPS partners a cohort of youth with mentor police officers during an 11-week curriculum of pressing issues including: bullying, anger management, avoidance of gang life, drug usage, police interaction, conflict management and many other youth- and law enforcement-focused topics.

Through these interactive sessions, students gain valuable skills to manage life situations while both the youth and law enforcement officers build positive relationships.

TAPS has been implemented by communities throughout the United States, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean in order to build trust, respect, and improve the personal safety of youth, law enforcement personnel and community members.


Penn trains hundreds of police officers annually, applying 21st century policing practices. In 2016 he founded the TAPS Center, which has the mission to be the leader in research, training, teaching, and programming to reduce the social distance between youth and police.

The TAPS Academy was instrumental in the 2017 passage of Texas' Community Safety Education Act of Texas, which requires all high school students, law enforcement officers and driver's license applicants to receive training to improve interactions between citizens and law enforcement. Penn is a member of the law's statewide implementation committee, which is being reviewed by several other states as a model.

Penn is currently writing the book *Police and YOUTH*, which presents the importance of, and methods to achieve, better police and citizen (youth) relations.

Penn is a Professor at the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL), where he teaches graduate-level courses in Race and Crime, and Criminology. He also has served as Social and Behavioral Sciences Division Chair at UHCL. In Houston, he has hosted podcasts and spoken on several panels for Houston Public Media, on community-police relations and "spending time with people who don't look like us," among other topics.

In 2005, he was named a Fulbright Professor of American Studies in Egypt. He previously served on the Board of Directors for the Fulbright Alumni Association and chaired its Diversity Task Force.

 Penn has authored dozens of publications on juvenile justice, race and crime, and homeland security.

Penn earned his doctorate in criminology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a master's degree in criminal justice from Texas A&M University-Central Texas. His Livingston College degree is in political science.

At Livingston College, Penn joined the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and became an officer in May 1990. His unit was activated for Operation Desert Storm in fall 1990. That semester, he took 24 hours of coursework in order to join his unit for deployment. He went on to become a Quartermaster Officer, serving in various capacities during his military career.

Penn, as an undergraduate, often made long drives from his home of Washington, D.C., to Rutgers' New Brunswick/Piscataway campus, noted Brian Butler, a retired Army officer who nominated Penn for the Livingston College Distinguished Alumni Award.

"His interaction with law enforcement on the New Jersey Turnpike became so routine he would often leave early in order to accommodate time for the expected stop," Butler wrote. "Through the various encounters he built a desire to study the interaction between Black males and law enforcement. ... This interest to understand and reduce the social distance between youth and law enforcement inspires his work to direct the international organization of TAPS Academy."

Penn has served as a U.S. Army officer, and a Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) as well as in various leadership positions in dozens of national, international and local organizations.



"I have known Dr. Penn for nearly 30 years and have watched him flourish both personally and professionally," Butler wrote in his nomination. "He is a man of true character and purpose. I have watched him from afar and worked beside him."

"The TAPS Academy program he built is something special and has been a force of change in how youth and police interact in communities around our great nation and internationally. TAPS Academy changes lives. ... Today he is one of the leading catalysts for constructive dialogue between youth and law enforcement and is a true champion for social justice."

Photos, from top: Courtesy of Dr. Everette Penn; Penn with a TAPS Academy class in Columbus, Ohio; Speaking on the diversity of his hometown of Houston, Texas; Receiving the President's Distinguished Service Award from William A. Staples, President of the University of Houston-Clear Lake.

[Distinguished Alumna Marie Varghese, LC'03, Helps College Students 'Survive and Thrive'](#)

Marie Varghese, a 2003 graduate of Livingston College at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, helps students, activists and others to "survive and thrive" through her mentorship and support. In her writing, she explores the contours of immigrant family life, queer (in)visibility, spirit, grief and resilience.



In 2018 the Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) honored Varghese with the Livingston College Distinguished Alumni Award, for her work as an educator and activist. Varghese and five other exceptional graduates of Livingston College were honored at an awards celebration on Tuesday, March 20, 2018, at Rutgers.

At Bronx Community College, part of the City University of New York (CUNY), Varghese is the Senior Advisor and Campus Trainer for the CUNY Start program.

CUNY Start is an intensive program for incoming college students who have earned a high school diploma or GED, and who need to increase their academic proficiency in reading, writing and mathematics prior to enrollment in college credit classes.

Varghese works with students to develop and implement individualized plans to succeed in their first year of college. While supporting students on campus, she focuses on three interdependent areas of college success: academic content, academic behaviors, and academic systems.

Her passion for college readiness stems from the support and guidance she received as an undergraduate at Livingston College. As the daughter of Indian immigrants, Varghese had no roadmap to college until she connected with professors, deans and student leaders who mentored her along the way.

At Rutgers, she was the President of the Student Action Union, served as a Resident Mentor for first-year students, became a Paul Robeson Scholar and was the recipient of the 2003 Lionel Cuffie Award for Activism and Excellence.

“Marie has made a direct impact on society by working closely with high school students, getting them fully prepared for not only college but life, teaching students problem-solving and self-advocacy,” according to her friend and fellow Livingston College alumna Alicia Piller, who nominated her for the Distinguished Alumni Award.

Marie takes special interest in advising and guiding teens to make the best decisions for their life.

“She has been a guiding light not just for me but for all of those that she comes into contact with. Marie devotes herself to helping others in the community with unwavering selflessness,” Piller wrote in her nomination.

“Marie finds a way to not only help each individual, but tailors her advice to each specific person.”

After obtaining her master’s degree at Columbia University, Varghese became a college advisor at a high school in the South Bronx that serves newly arrived immigrants to the United States.

In addition to her role at CUNY Start, she works as a consultant for the Sadie Nash Leadership Project, an organization designed to strengthen, empower, and equip young women as agents for change in their lives and in the world.

✖ Varghese comes from a long line of storytellers. Her poem, “Rearranging the Bones,” was recently published in *Imaninan: Poets Writing in the Anzaldúan Borderlands* in homage to Gloria Anzaldúa and her iconic work *Borderlands/La Frontera*. She is also an alumna of Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation, a national network for writers of color.

Photo, center (in front of Livingston College banner): From the 2003 Livingston College yearbook, Diversity: Roots of Knowledge. Other photos are courtesy of Marie Varghese.

Wells Keddie Reflects on ‘a Life of Troublemaking’

[Editor’s Note: The following text was included in a memorial program for Wells Hamilton Keddie, a Professor Emeritus of Labor Studies and Livingston College Fellow who died in 2006. (PDF copy of the memorial program.)]

In Spring of 2005, in preparation for the inauguration of the Wells H. Keddie Scholarship Fund (scholarships to be awarded to Rutgers undergraduates who combine solid scholarship with social activism), Wells was asked to provide a brief account of his own life of activism. This is what he wrote: ✖

A Life of Troublemaking

When I was seventeen and editor of the Cactus Chronicle, the student newspaper at Tucson Senior High School, I wrote an editorial extolling the virtues of socialism for the United States. That I still believe in the virtues of socialism is proof that hope springs eternal.

When I was 21 and editor of the San Diego State College student newspaper, I wrote an editorial extolling the virtues of unions for workers in all occupations. That I still believe in the virtues of unions for workers in all occupations is further proof that hope springs eternal.

✖ But I did not get my first union card until the Summer of 1947 when I was a student at Stanford on the GI Bill (thanks to a two-year hitch in the Navy during World War II). I was working in the warehouse of a Nehi Bottling distributor loading trucks with case after case of bottled soft drinks. I became a card-carrying member of the Teamsters union.

The Nehi job was the scene of what was really my first (of many to follow!) serious conflict with The Boss. Truck drivers were putting in long hours without overtime pay, under a deal with the union that during the off season they could go home early without losing pay. The catch for me was that during the off season I would have gone back to my part-time job as a non-union laborer for the Stanford Corporation Yard. The answer to my problems was obvious: I claimed unpaid overtime pay on my last day on the Nehi job.

What an uproar that caused! The union, at my insistence, pursued my claim, and I won back pay. I noted at the time the sympathy expressed by the union lawyer not for me but for the management attorney for having to appear before whatever board finally settled the case.


The die, as they say, was cast. I was completely enamored of the power collective action brings and equally enamored of the need for union democracy – twin principles that have served me well during a turbulent life of trouble-making-for-The-Boss (including the occasional Union Boss...).

Some “before Rutgers” examples of trouble-making stand out in my fading memory:




After graduating from Stanford, I was in pursuit of a Ph.D. in economics (viva! GI Bill) when the University of California Board of Regents decided they needed a loyalty oath from the faculty members at all of the University’s campuses throughout the state. Resistance was most pronounced at the Berkeley campus, where a handful of professors were fired for refusing to sign the oath. As a teaching assistant I was not yet required to sign the Regents’ oath, but I did become one of the organizers of a group on the Berkeley campus opposed to the oath called the Non-Senate Academic Employees, as close as we could come to collective action, or so we thought in those days. (Unions in higher ed? Forget about it!)

In 1950, all state employees were required to sign a “loyalty” oath, and since I refused to sign, I was promptly fired from my TA position. Since the GI Bill had long since run out, graduate work was put aside as I changed from part-time blue collar work to full-time.

 Full-time work included a stint at Linde Air Products as a warehouse worker, once again as a Teamster. While on that job, Dave Beck – a Union Boss if there ever was one – arranged with the employers our Teamster local union bargained with to deduct from our paychecks payments for life insurance that Dave Beck’s son just happened to be selling. A huge meeting of outraged Teamsters represented by our local rejected the deal. Next paycheck, the deduction remained intact. At the next meeting of the local, minutes of the last meeting were read, and lo and behold, no mention of the membership’s rejection of the insurance deal was made. I brashly moved to correct the minutes, was ejected from the meeting, and told to look for other work. My desire for union democracy was reinforced. ...

I ended up at GM's Fisher Body plant in Oakland, California, where we assembled Chevrolet bodies from parts shipped by rail from various locations in the East. I joined the UAW immediately, and eventually became a shop steward as well as a delegate to the Alameda County CIO Council. From that Council, I was a delegate to the California CIO State Convention at which we voted to join with the AFL to form what we know today as the AFL-CIO – it's all my fault, folks! It was at the end of the convention when the president of the Alameda County CIO Council uttered these immortal words to me: "You are cheating the Communist Party out of dues!" It was not the first nor the last time I was red-baited over being a union activist who perversely thought that collective bargaining done right would lead to socialism. ... (Talk about being perverse!)

As luck would have it, I injured my back on the job, and I now have a Body by Fisher – if you don't remember the ad, the play on words admittedly loses something. I went right back to graduate school, this time seeking a secondary teaching credential so that I could get a job teaching economics at a "junior college," as community colleges were called in California. But I could not be placed for "apprentice teaching" once the school principal learned of my UAW background. I ended up at Claremont Graduate University (my then-wife had a teaching job in the Claremont Undergraduate Colleges system). While I was being smuggled into the apprentice teaching system by a really wonderful professor of education, I made contact with an equally tolerant professor of economics, and I was back in pursuit of the Ph.D. after a long lapse.

After a Ford Grant year in Iran (there is truth to the rumor that I was given the grant because of my work at General Motors), gathering material for a dissertation in development economics, I discovered there were no jobs for me in California thanks to my being on a privately generated "red" list because of my UAW activity. That's when Lehigh University decided I was just the person to teach labor economics to its all-male undergraduates: The university had the quaint notion that these future industrialists needed to know what union-generated morass they were headed for. 

The job at Lehigh made me available for teaching union members a variety of subjects under the newly formed Union Leadership Academy run in Pennsylvania by the Penn State University's Department of Labor Education. The experience of teaching union members in labor education classes opened a whole new academic field to me, and as soon as I could I left Lehigh and economics behind me, taking a job I hadn't known existed: in Labor Studies, at Penn State, teaching both union members and undergraduate majors. Seven years later, after trying unsuccessfully to bring the AFT to Penn State and after getting into the thick of the anti-Vietnam War struggle, I was denied tenure, the first such rejection of a department's recommendation in the history of the school.

I then had the great good fortune to be hired as a one-person Department of Labor Studies at Rutgers' Livingston College. I was appointed to this job by John Leggett – things were casual at Livingston College in 1972! The job came with a union in place, and the AAUP became my bargaining representative and my


union stamping ground.

One of the great compliments ever paid me was said at a Livingston College faculty council meeting when President Ed Bloustein looked down the length of the table to where I sat and proclaimed: "The biggest mistake I ever made was giving you tenure."

I have tried to live up to that standard ever since – and before, too.


Photos, from top: Wells Hamilton Keddie, around the time of his high school graduation; In the Navy; In an undated photo in or near San Francisco, California; At the State Convention where the California CIO voted to join with the AFL; At the Steelworkers Institute in 1969.

Two Faculty Members, Six Alumni Honored in 2018

The Livingston Alumni Association (LAA) honored two faculty members and six alumni from the former Livingston College of Rutgers University-New Brunswick, at an awards dinner on Tuesday, March 20, 2018, held at the Rutgers Club at the Livingston Dining Commons. 

In photo, from left: Carlyle E. Shelton Jr., Dr. Everette Penn, Marie Varghese, Jeanie Bryson with her granddaughter Ayanna Jean Bryson, Staci Berger, Michael Greenberg and Robert W. Snyder.

Printed program from the event. (PDF file)

 We honored two faculty members who played a key role in the establishment and growth of Livingston College and its mission, and who have contributed to the overall Rutgers and global communities, with the Livingston Legacy Award:

Michael R. Greenberg, Interim Dean and Professor of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Public Policy at Rutgers University-New Brunswick.

Wells Hamilton Keddie (1925-2006), a Professor of Labor Studies and Employment Relations at Rutgers University-New Brunswick (posthumous, pictured at left).

We also honored six Livingston College Distinguished Alumni who have distinguished themselves by contributions they have made in their chosen fields of endeavor, by the leadership they have exhibited, and by the general benefits to the larger society resulting from their activities:

- **Staci Berger**, LC'94, EJB/GSNB'04*, Housing and community development advocate.
 - **Jeanie Bryson**, LC'81, Jazz/pop/Latin vocalist.
 - **Dr. Everette Penn**, LC'91, Criminology professor; race/youth/justice scholar.
 - **Carlyle E. Shelton Jr.**, LC'80, Deputy Inspector General, U.S. Marine Corps.
 - **Robert W. Snyder**, LC'77, Professor, American studies and Journalism.
 - **Marie Varghese**, LC'03, College advisor and social justice advocate.
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Our thanks to:

- Kenny Hinds, Facebook Live videographer;
 - Luis Largo, photographer;
 - The Rutgers Club;
 - Zimmerli Art Museum, for donating the gift book HereNow to the honorees;
 - Student guests/presenters: Amanda Batista, Peter Carkhuff, Colin Chehanske, Nicoletta Eby, Lauren Forsman, Dezzie Ligon, and Rajanpreet Pannu. Student attendance was made possible through financial support received from the Rutgers University Alumni Association.
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- Michelle Josias, event chairperson;
 - Mindy Hoffman, audio interviews;
 - Jason Goldstein and Iris Martinez-Campbell, printed programs;
 - LAA board members in attendance/event committee members, in addition to those listed above: Rosemary Agrista, Jeffrey Armus, Debra O'Neal, Eric Schwarz, Marty Siederer, and Derek Young.
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* Rutgers University acronyms for its colleges/schools include: LC (Livingston College), EJB (Edward J. Bloustein School of Public Policy), and GSNB (Graduate School-New Brunswick).