

Amesika Nyaku, M.D.



Dr. Amesika Nyaku is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School and a physician-scientist. She is a graduate of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine where she completed medical school, Internal Medicine residency, and an Infectious Diseases fellowship. She is also co-director of the Northern New Jersey Medication-Assisted Treatment Center of Excellence that is tasked with assisting the State in expanding access to medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder through education, novel service delivery, and community collaboration. She received her BA, MS, and M.D. from Northwestern University.

Tia Ryans



Tia Ryans is the founder and Executive Director of FORTE House, a referral-based support program for people who have been incarcerated. As someone formerly under the care of the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility, Tia will be the first formerly incarcerated person to serve on a DOC advisory board. She also currently serves on the advisory boards of NJ-STEP and the

Princeton Prison Teaching Initiative. Tia received her bachelor's degree from Rutgers University-Newark.

Johanna Foster, Ph.D.



Dr. Johanna Foster is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Monmouth University, where her research interests include intersectional feminism and the incarceration of women. Dr. Foster currently co-coordinates the Monmouth University Academic Exchange Program where Monmouth University students and students living in New Jersey state prisons study together in combined classes. She formerly served as the director of the Gender Studies Program at Monmouth University. She holds a Ph.D. from Rutgers University, and earned her master's and bachelor's degrees from American University.

Bonnie Kerness



Bonnie Kerness became an anti-racist activist when she was 14, volunteering at New York's University Settlement House. She participated during the civil rights era, trained in Tennessee by the NAACP and Highlander Center as a community organizer. Moving North in 1970, she

became active with welfare, tenants' rights, and anti-war issues, working with the American Friends Service Committee in 1971 in Elizabeth, NJ. IN 1976, the AFSC moved to Newark opening the Newark Justice Program working with family members of people in prison.

Bonnie has an MSW and currently serves as Director of the American Friends Service Committee's Prison Watch Program. She is an advisor to California Prison Focus; Critical Resistance; and SolitaryWatch, a website monitoring solitary confinement in US prisons. She, her students, and those with lived experience contributed to the publications of "Our Children's House" – testimonies on juvenile imprisonment; "Torture in US Prisons – Evidence of US Human Rights Violations"; "The Prison Inside the Prison: Control Units, Supermax Prisons and Devices of Torture", the Survivor's Manual written by for those living in solitary confinement; and "Inalienable Rights". Her articles have appeared in numerous publications including Peace Review-a Journal of Social Justice, the Atlantic Journal of Communications, War Resisters League Magazine, and others. Bonnie speaks widely on mass imprisonment on behalf of men, women, and children in US prisons using the framework of the United Nations Covenants and Treaties.

Bonnie has had a special interest in working with imprisoned women and many years ago served on the Board of Directors of the Women's Lifers. Throughout the decades of her involvement with imprisonment issues, she has met and worked with each New Jersey Commissioner of Corrections; often testifying at Parole Board Annual Meetings and the NJ State legislature. In recent years she has worked with New Jersey students and the women at Edna Mahon to publish the nationally valued "From Her Mouth to Your Ears" available in both English and Spanish. The book is full of advice and suggestions by and for women in prison so they can re-enter in a healthier and more stable manner. It is available in every state via Chaplaincy Services. Her commitment to the women at Edna Mahon includes decades-long correspondence encouraging the women to share concerns, particularly since more recent difficulties. In meeting regularly with the Office of the Ombudsman, central office staff, and the Commissioner of Women, invaluable relationships benefitting the voices of women inside have formed.

La'Nae Grant



La’Nae Grant is the Director of the Child and Adult Care Food Program for the City of East Orange. Grant will be the first transgender woman to serve on the Edna Mahan Board of Trustees. Grant is also a longtime activist for the rights of the transgender community, including transgender persons that are currently incarcerated. Grant received her bachelor’s degree from Kean University. She holds a masters’ degree from the Rutgers Graduate School of Social Work.

Kathleen Witcher



Kathleen Witcher is the President of the Irvington NAACP and a long-time active member of the NAACP's Prison Project Committee. Witcher is also a retired public school teacher.

Karma Brown Warren, M.D.



Dr. Karma Brown Warren is an Associate Professor of Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. She is a former staff physician, having served at East Orange Veterans Hospital, Rutgers University-Newark, Irvington General Hospital, and Newark Beth Israel Medical Center. Prior to her career in medicine, she worked as an electrical engineer for several Fortune 500 companies. Dr. Warren holds a bachelor's degree from Tuskegee University. She received her M.D. from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.