

Welcome to year 3 of the JBOT newsletter! This issue highlights a rising new grad's reflection on advocating for underrepresented groups in the OT profession, AOTA's response to the U.S. Capitol breach, highlights of international JBOT, a new pilot study to assess needs of Black OT students, and a new OT's reflection on her practice to address the needs of people justice-involved. Thank you for your interest in JBOT and we welcome you to be involved in the promotion of occupational justice!

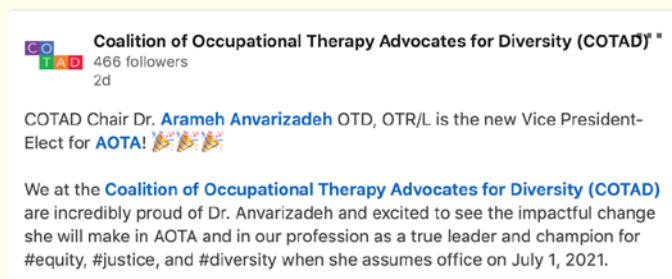
COTAD Leader is Voted as Vice President Elect to AOTA

COTAD Chair

Dr. Arameh Anvarizadeh OTD, OTR/L



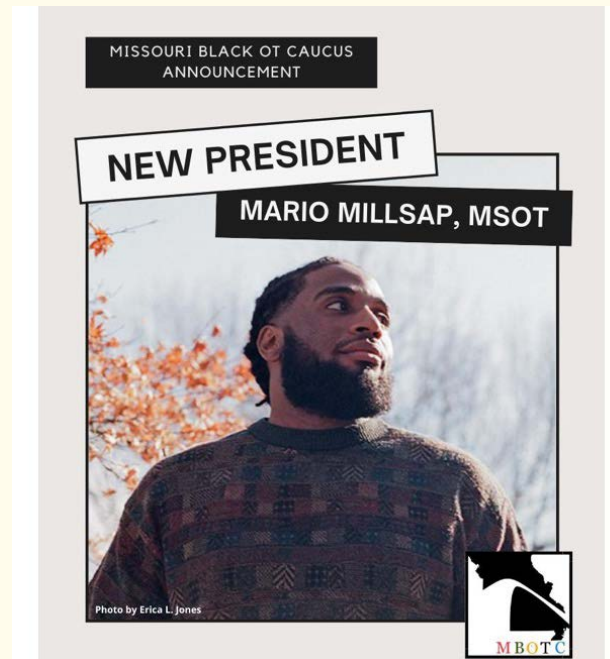
On February 2nd, 2021, AOTA released the results of their 2021 elections. Dr. Anvarizadeh, a COTAD leader, was elected to be the next Vice President of AOTA. Dr. Anvarizadeh, as well as the other elects, will assume office on July 1, 2021.



Click the link to learn more about the 2021 AOTA election results: <https://lnkd.in/enK3VvK>

Student Voice - Presenting at the AOTA Education Summit

See pages 5-7 for full speech.



Sharing my experience as a student at this year's AOTA Education Summit was a tremendous opportunity. It was very daunting to be so open and vulnerable with such an esteemed and accomplished audience, but it provided me a platform to bring attention to our profession's reluctance to take the necessary actions to uphold their words of advocating for diversity, equity and inclusion has real consequences for underrepresented groups - and ultimately our profession. It impacts how we connect with our clients, peers & colleagues, as well as our ability to be true change agents in a society that is currently coming to terms with the occupational injustices steeped in our country. There is a genuine interest from therapists across the spectrum who want to be part of this equity-based work. If we want to make that foundational shift, it starts by intentionally incorporating it into our OT/OTA programs. 1



AOTA's Response to the U.S. Capitol Breach

<https://www.aota.org/AboutAOTA/GetInvolved/BOD/News/2021/Capitol-Breach.aspx>

"AOTA strongly condemns the violence and unlawful assault on the U.S. Capitol and the ongoing threats of violence in Washington, DC, and locations across the United States... The 2020 *Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics* applies to all occupational therapy practitioners and calls on us to "not engage in actions that are uncivil, intimidating, or bullying or that contribute to violence."

We choose to be occupational therapy practitioners to empower people to achieve their most meaningful lives. The convictions, core values, and ethics of our profession stand in stark contrast to the recent violence and unlawful assault on the U.S. Capitol.

Resources:

Code of Ethics: AOTA provides education and enforcement of ethical standards for the profession, and AOTA's Ethics Commission has jurisdiction over AOTA members who violate the Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics. AOTA's resources on [Occupational Therapy and Ethics](#) include information about how to file an ethics complaint.

AOTA-AESIS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Educational Series

Monthly, via Zoom, at 3pm PST/ 5pm CST/ 6pm EST

Events:

- October 22, 2020: Cultural Relevance and Equity in Fieldwork
- November 19, 2020: Justice Based Occupational Therapy
- January 21, 2021: Equity and Inclusion in Academic Programs
- February 18, 2021: Holistic Admissions and Future Directions
- March 11, 2021: Supporting LGBTQIA+ Communities- OT Students and Clients
- April 15, 2021: Equity and Inclusive Practices with Students with Disabilities

Zoom Information:

- Link: <https://aota.zoom.us/j/3218669443?pwd=OXhubHNDRDZyc1RDSXFodmtlZklDdz09>
- Meeting ID: 321 866 9443
- Passcode: 180745

Questions or comments?

- Contact: Selena Washington, PhD, OTR/L
- Selena.Washington@health.slu.edu

JBOT Internationally

5 Activities to Help Conquer Occupational Disruption

In the July 2020 issue of *Occupational Therapy Now*: As a result of Covid-19 and in order to slow the spread of the virus, people around the world are experiencing constraints and life disruptions. Occupational Therapists have expressed the importance of seeking alternative, meaningful occupations as well as occupational engagements in order to better one's mental health. Dr. Hiba Zafran offers a description of activities needed the most (pg. 5-6) and Dr. Rachel Thibeault outlined five activities that can help build resilience and help one bring back meaning to their life (pg. 7).

https://caot.ca/uploaded/web/otnow/OT%20Now_JULY_20.pdf#page=9



Occupational Therapy Responses to the Global Pandemic

How White Supremacy has Impacted Occupational Therapy Education in Canada

From *Health Education* (February, 2020): Dr. Marie-Lyne Grenier analyzes how anti-Blackness and anti-Indigenous relations have impacted the Canadian healthcare system, as well as 'how cultural competency is a logical product of these historical processes'. Grenier concludes that there must be a necessary 'shift away from cultural competency frameworks towards critical and structural ones in healthcare education programs,' and throughout this article she provides many suggestions that could contribute to a more inclusive Canadian healthcare system. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0017896920902515>

Australian Mental Health Facility Transitions Back to Occupation Centered Practices

From the *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* (Jan. 2020): Author Dr. Gail Whiteford and co-authors from the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network used a practice-based enquiry approach – a type of action methods research to explore OT in an Australian forensic mental health setting. Findings indicate that OTs reclaimed occupation centered practice in order to help their patients experiencing occupational depression.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0308022619865223>

Save The Date

AOTA Inspire 2021

- April 2021
- Virtual (+ San Diego, CA, USA)

World Federation of Occupational Therapists Congress

- March 27-30, 2022
- Paris, France
- Call for papers closes March 17th, 2021

OT Summit of Scholars

- June 23-25, 2021
- Virtual
- Call for abstracts closes February 19, 2021
- Registration to open January 11, 2021

Conference of the Society for the Study of Occupation (SSO): USA

- Sept. 23-25, 2021
- St. Petersburg, FL, USA



JBOT AROUND THE U.S.

The Journal of Occupational Science's Introduction to the Anti-Racism Virtual Issue



The anti-racism virtual issue of *the Journal of Occupational Science* (Oct. 2020): Includes a position statement, 'A Pledge to Mobilize Against Racism' (Stanley et al., 2020). The issue provides articles that address racism and how we as individuals can make a difference. Topics covered include: slavery, migration, deculturalization, marginalized populations, and occupational justice. The introduction also provides articles that focus on the work that occupational scientists are doing to correct these issues.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14427591.2020.1824567>

Journal of Occupational Science Special Issue Call for Papers
"An occupational perspective on COVID-19" Seeking submissions on:

- Occupational justice during pandemics
- Doing, being, becoming and belonging during confinement
- Impact of social and political responses to pandemics on occupations of individuals and populations
- Illuminating the complexity of occupations during crises
- Occupation and its relationship to health in light of a pandemic
- More info at: www.bit.ly/Occupational_Science, Due by July 2, 2021

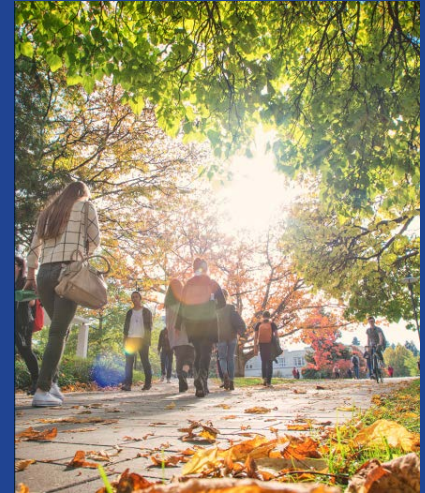
OT and Nursing Professors Launch Project to Improve Workplace Health in Correctional Facilities

Highlighted in the Boston Globe (Jan. 7, 2021): "Correctional officers are particularly prone to stress" due to "their exposure to potential violent behavior," long work shifts, and disturbances in sleep schedules (Laidler, 2021). These factors can impact one's overall health. Dr. Mazen El Ghaziri and Dr. Lisa Jaegers will work with a national team of corrections representatives to develop evidence-based solutions to address trauma and stress reduction in this project funded by the National Institute of Corrections.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/01/07/metro/umass-lowell-professor-is-working-bring-stress-relief-correctional-officers/> & <https://www.uml.edu/news/stories/2020/health-correctional-officers.aspx>

Save the Date

1st World Occupational Science Conference – WOSC



- 2022 – August 25-27, 2022. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
- Conference Theme: Occupation and Society: Global to Local Perspectives for the Future.
- Co-sponsors: Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, UBC <https://osot.ubc.ca> &
- The International Society for Occupational Science <http://www.isocscsci.org>



AOTA Education Summit Keynote Speech 2.0 (from page 1)

Mario Millsap

MSOT

Washington University School of Medicine
Program in Occupational Therapy '20

As a 29-year old Black man, I was ecstatic to finally be accepted into an occupational therapy program after three attempts at the application process. Although OT was a career I never knew existed until my mid-twenties, I was drawn to the profession due to the unique approach to care – one that focused on activities and allowed the client to guide their treatment. Once I arrived on Washington University's campus after working full-time as a rehab aide, I couldn't wait to get started. I expected to be challenged adapting to having homework again and connecting with classmates who were just out of college. I did not expect that I would be in for one of the most challenging times in my life – and one that would transform me into the person I am today.

Early in the semester, I am being taught all about building rapport, cultural humility, and the importance of meeting your clients where they are. All while I was being repeatedly assured that chasing the A Train wasn't necessary here. Simply focus on understanding the material. I thought, "Great! Grades were my least favorite thing about school. I just wanted to learn. That was why I was here."

Cut to a few weeks later, I am pulled into private meetings with educators questioning my aptitude and ability to keep up in the program. I would occasionally be late to class, I didn't know about APA formatting, and I wouldn't bother with small-point assignments. Instead of asking what I needed or even attempted to understand me or my situation, I was encouraged to not focus on my family's well-being – who I was still living with & supporting, all while caring for an ailing sister. They told me to give up my volunteer work with at-risk youth – an activity they repeatedly praised me for when I was admitted – all for the sake of focusing my studies or risk being "academically separated." That jarring experience would jump-start a repeated pattern of assimilation instead of accommodation during my time in the program. It wasn't until I developed relationships with Drs. Quinn Tyminski & Jess Dashner, before I even had an educator reach out to me and ask me what they could do to teach the information in a way that made better sense to me, or ask me if I was OK after looking distracted in class and encouraged me to take a self-care day. It was near the end of the first semester before I saw in action precisely what I was being taught.

After my first year, I honestly felt let down and questioned my reason for being here. The promise of occupational therapy being for everyone was not being met in the same environment I am learning about it. After listening to my classmate's own experiences and many Black OTs about their time as students, it was clear that I was not alone in noticing this hypocrisy. For a profession that prides itself on a vision for the future based on diversity, equity, and inclusion, OT programs are falling short of putting that into practice. Programs are focused on diversity and bringing in students of color, but they fail to create environmental supports to enable inclusion and equity, which is how students feel welcomed and appreciated for their experiences and perspectives – not just their skin color, ethnicity, or orientation.

As the program continued to chip away at me for not fitting the box of a upper-middle-class white woman, I had to rely on outside supports to make it through the program. I had my Black classmates who supported me emotionally and affirmed me with their own encounters in the program. The lone Black staff member we had gave me some strategies to cope and would advocate on my behalf. I was aware of the Missouri Black OT Caucus, who gave me a safe space to talk about my struggles and learn they also went through the same coming up - and still do in their professional careers. I was able to attend AOTA Conference last year, where I saw hundreds of Black OTs and Black OT students who shared their tales and assured me that OT was not just for white people.

AOTA Education Summit Keynote Speech 2.0, continued

But I am one of the lucky ones. We originally had five Black students in my cohort of almost 100 (which was a program record) - and we were fortunate to get along and grew exceptionally close. That lone Black staff member, Dr. Duana Russell-Thomas, happens to be the President of the National Black OT Caucus. The Missouri Black OT Caucus happens to be one of the more active caucuses in the United States. Dr. Russell-Thomas is still fielding calls from Black students across multiple states who are often the only person of color in a class of 30-60-100 students with no other form of representation or support. Many students cannot afford to pay the fees to attend conferences to get the same affirmation I did. I know Black students alone in their programs who built up the courage to call for equity and program support, only for their voices met with further isolation and heartbreaking silence from the administration. Simultaneously, OT programs across the US are scratching their heads as to why Black OT graduates aren't seeking a return to teach in a setting & culture that represents nothing but hostility and trauma for them?

We cannot continue to provide this lip service to working with and supporting marginalized populations when we do not even protect and take care of our own marginalized students and peers. It is 2020, and Black students are still dealing with racially insensitive remarks about their hair or appearance in open workspaces while their white peers watch and say or do nothing. Black students are forced to put aside their identity to provide services for schools & organizations too fearful to openly affirm their experiences or support their fight for societal equity. Black students are still routinely being neglected and not receiving quality mentorship or educational experiences on Fieldwork. If they vocalize this, they are often met with gaslighting or dismissiveness and are repeatedly left to fend for themselves in an already unsympathetic environment. When will our profession take these things as a serious problem?

There is no paint-by-numbers approach to addressing racism and racial inequity, nor is there a prominent person of color you can invite to your respective programs to do the work for you. Equity work cannot be done by a singular individual and is not a one-and-done endeavor. It is a process, one that starts by asking yourselves hard questions.

Ask yourselves:

- Do your programs include equity work in their curriculums through action rather than merely in the content? For example, this is an election year. Voting is an essential occupation in the community and for self-advocacy. We are well-aware of the history of voter suppression & political disenfranchisement in our country. What programs or initiatives are your respective OT programs doing to enable your community's participation? To ensure occupational justice that each student has access to the ability to vote? Have you canceled classes for November 3? It is tempting to assume this work will be done by the DE&I office of our Universities, but what about YOUR OT program specifically supporting this important occupation?
- What are your programs doing for the betterment of your communities? Are you only reaching out and utilizing people of color when your students need opportunities to practice their skills? Are Black people only being brought in to talk about race - like this keynote, for example? Is your relationship with the your community reciprocal? Do you have positive relationships with organizations or community leaders?
- How familiar are you with your school's comfort level with making significant program changes? Do you have leadership that believes in addressing this issue? How will you respond if they are not interested in the work? What will you do should you encounter resistance? The resistance to equity work may not be outward or vocal; it may show up as half-hearted measures to 'check boxes' and undermine meetings to discuss procedures instead of taking action.

AOTA Education Summit Keynote Speech 2.0, continued

From my student organizing efforts with the Wash U Black OT Collective and the Wash U Anti-Bigotry Coalition, I feel like it is a godsend to have a new program director that wants to create change as badly as we do. Some faculty members have long expressed frustration at our program's history of inaction when made aware of these inequities but felt powerless to make a difference based on academia's various environmental pressures. They have been actively supporting our efforts to make our OT program better and I am thankful for them. It is early, but I am encouraged by the steps taken so far. My student activism experience is not the norm – but it should be, and it should not have to come or only be taken seriously after a string of senseless murders of Black people.

We cannot complain that our society does not understand occupational therapy if we do not show people and communities what we do. While it is easy to take pride in producing publications for OT-centered literature, and the USA Today Rankings value it on their annual program list, the clients, the community – those who we are meant to serve - do not see them, nor do they care. They do not have access to the journals where many of my colleagues' brilliant evidence-based papers reside that are hidden behind expensive paywalls. They cannot attend conferences to read posters, see presentations, and learn about the cutting-edge technology of our trade. Research has tremendous value, but it cannot begin and end there. Without actionable follow-through they become self-congratulatory efforts while abdicating from the work to impact society for the better. OT's efforts to remain apolitical – while being a profession where enabling access and participation is literally the basis of our entire framework – makes zero sense to me. Political activist Angela Davis once said that "Optimism is a political act". As OTs, when we render our services, we are literally instilling hope to our clients that they will have a better quality of life. By this definition I choose to be political and invite you to be as well.

I speak with passion because I firmly believe in the idea that OT can and should be for everyone. We have a generation of OT students now and in the future who also want to see this profession deliver on this promise. Not just Black students, but also White students, Latinx students, Asian students, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ students. We all have such a unique lens that can be incredibly beneficial to our everchanging and more multicultural society. A society that is growing more aware of the many systemic occupational barriers around them. **OT as a profession cannot progress until we make the conscious decision not to be allies, but to be accomplices – those willing to work collaboratively to dismantle these historical infrastructures that undermine real equity for ALL people.** Even at the expense of backlash, comfort, or personal gain. And it begins at our institutions.

I channel Ms. Davis once more, quoting, "I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept." That is why I am here today. I could no longer accept that my student experience was OK. I cannot accept that my experiences are just one of many in a long line of OT students that came before me, and I want to change that. My hope is that after listening, you too - as current leaders of our profession, will be inspired to be change agents and better foster our future. Thank you. -Mario Millsap

Thank You

We appreciate Mario's generosity and vulnerability in sharing his experience.

To connect with Mario,
he's on LinkedIn:

[linkedin.com/in/mario-millsap](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mario-millsap)

Reflections

Share your reflections on justice-based OT!

Students, practitioners, researchers, collaborators, and clients are welcome to send their story to JBOT for a future newsletter!

~250-300 words
~include a photo

Email:
ljaegers@slu.edu



INTERPROFESSIONAL JBOT

Justice-Bases OT Program Development: LAITR

Pilot

Dr. Gonzalez was a post-professional doctoral student at Washington University in St. Louis when she developed and piloted an occupational therapy (OT) program in a Missouri Department of Corrections (DOC) Community Supervision Center (CSC) from January-March 2020. Justice-involved individuals (JII) in the CSC are required to stay as residents for 90-120 days prior to community reentry due to their high risk for recidivism as determined by DOC. For this pilot, the occupational therapist had 5 JII residents for 1:1 intervention and ran groups including leisure groups at the local recreation center, Stages of Change and SMART goal planning. COVID-19 interrupted the longevity of this pilot, however within 12 weeks clients demonstrated positive results and staff reports confirmed positive changes after participating in OT. Significant changes in health measures included increased self-efficacy managing emotions, decreased sleep disturbances and decreased anxiety. The manuscript for this pilot is on its way to being published and indicates potential for this program's feasibility to address criminogenic needs, improve health measures and ultimately reduce recidivism.



Ariana Gonzalez

OTD, OTR/L

**Life After Incarceration:
Transition and Reentry
(LAITR)**

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Lifeafterincarceration.com

Email:

agonzalez@lifeafterincarceration.com

Student Involvement and Telehealth

As a result of COVID-19, OT students across the nation needed fieldwork options. Dr. Gonzalez used this opportunity to re-initiate the OT services provided in the CSC earlier that year but this time via telehealth. As a result, and under Dr. Gonzalez's supervision, two rotations of level II fieldwork students provided telehealth services to over 20 JII from June 2020-December 2020. Groups ran twice weekly and included topics such as parenting, financial management, nutrition and meal planning, leisure, sleep hygiene, goal setting, book club and prosocial communication strategies. Individuals who participated in 1:1 services saw OT 1-2x per week and worked on various topics for their transitions into the community. Students also provided OT services to one probation and parole officer (PO) and 7 in-services to POs on topics such as behavior management, trauma-informed care, common diagnoses in JII, stress-management, self-management and Stages of Change.

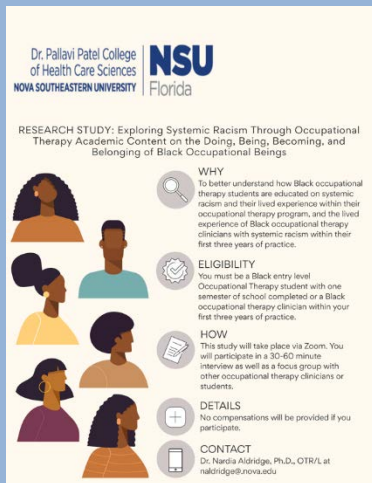
Future Directions

As a result of her experience and passion for OT's role in justice settings, Dr. Gonzalez started Life After Incarceration: Transition and Reentry, LLC (LAITR) in November 2020. Through LAITR, she contracts with local, state or federal agencies to provide OT services to JII, staff services (in-services or 1:1 interventions) and program development and/or modification for JII. It is Dr. Gonzalez's dream for every JII across the nation to have access to an occupational therapist during their transitions into the community.

A special thank you to LAITR's early advisory committee members including: Carolyn Baum, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, Lisa Jaegers, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, Quinn Tyminski, OTD, OTR/L, Kevin Knickerbocker, Jacob Eikenberry, MSW, PhD Student and Stanley Adelman.

NSU Study: Black OT Students and Systemic Racism

<https://www.aota.org/Conference-Events/2020-education-summit.aspx>



Current year two (2) students at Nova Southeastern University, under the supervision of Dr. Nardia Aldridge, are conducting a study to focus on how well Black occupational therapy students are being educated on systemic racism in the classroom and if entry-level occupational therapists who have been practicing for 1-3 years have experienced any form of systemic racism while working in the field. We are seeking individuals who are willing to participate in a focus group and/or a one-on-one interview via Zoom lasting 30-60 minutes.

To be included in this study, you must: Identify as either a Black OT student in an accredited entry-level program (MOT, MSOT, OTD) who has completed at least one semester or a Black Occupational Therapist within their first three (3) years of practice.

If you are interested in participating in our study, please contact Dr. Nardia Aldridge at naldridge@nova.edu or by calling 917-280-5359.

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@JusticeOT1

Continuing Education

Due to overwhelming interest and in an effort to support the needs of those interested in justice-based practice, education, research, and program development, Saint Louis University has developed an online continuing education course that is now open for trainees. Proceeds from the course go directly back to the SLU OT Transition & Integration Services (OTTIS) program (http://bit.ly/ottis_slu)

OTTIS Continuing Education Course: <https://tj-sl.u.thinkific.com/>

For more info, please contact

Christine Hayes at 314-977-8583 or christine.hayes@health.slu.edu

JBOT's Core Team Includes:

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