



THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL



UNC  
CFAR  
Center for AIDS Research

# UNC CENTER FOR AIDS RESEARCH

**NEWS LETTER | February 2024**

*First Edition*



**Director's Spotlight**



*Dr. Audrey Pettifor and Dr. David Margolis*

Most of you know that we recently lost our dear colleague Dr. Ada Adimora. We will miss her scholarship, leadership, and passion. Within our CFAR, Ada held the role of Co-Director, in addition to being the site PI for our WHIS/MACS site. During her career she held many national and international leadership roles including as Chair of the HPTN Women at Risk Committee, the NIH Office of AIDS Research Advisory Council, and the Presidential Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS. She brought important insights to all of these roles, teaching us lessons that I am sure we will remember.

Our CFAR has formulated a new leadership transition plan that will unfold over the next several years. As the first step, Dr. David Margolis has become Co-Director of the CFAR. Dave is well known for his years of work in HIV medicine, and a long effort in research towards a cure. In addition, Dr. Audrey Pettifor joins our leadership team as Associate Director while she is also stepping up to the role of Director of our Developmental Core. Audrey is a social epidemiologist who has worked in the area of HIV prevention in adolescent girls and young women in Southern Africa for many years and more recently among LGBTQ+ adolescents in the U.S. Drs. Prema Menezes and Myron Cohen will continue to serve as CFAR Associate Directors.

Please welcome Dave and Audrey to the UNC CFAR leadership team. They have been important members of our CFAR community for many years, I am sure you will enjoy working with them as we move forward with the challenge of ending the epidemic.

Ron Swanstrom  
UNC CFAR Co-Director

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## Shining a Light on Community Engagement



# MESSAGE FROM OUR OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (OCE) MANAGER

By Alicia Diggs, CFAR Office of Community Engagement Manager

2024 is off to a quick start! We are already in the beginning of the second month of the year and I hope it has been great for you so far. Through the CFAR Office of Community Engagement (OCE), we partner with and work closely with community-based organizations to establish and grow strong relationships based on equity, trust, and accountability. Within the OCE is our CFAR Community Collaboration Board (CCB) which is critical to the success of the CFAR endeavors and is an independent source of guidance and feedback for the Principal Investigator, the program leadership, and researchers. This quarter we would like to spotlight two of our dedicated CCB members who have over the years brought great value and influence to the CFAR.

Dr. Kate MacQueen, who has recently retired from FHI 360 and her role as CFAR Developmental Core Director, and Flex Jonez, who is the Executive Director of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Alliance in Winston Salem were interviewed to share their experience and time with the CFAR Community Collaboration Board.



Thank you for being an essential part of the UNC CFAR family.



## CFAR Community Collaboration Board Spotlights:

### Dr. Kate MacQueen

*By Dr. Kate MacQueen - Retiree of FHI360 and CFAR Developmental Core Director*

#### **What made you decide to go into the area of research?**

"I was a graduate student studying population dynamics and the intersection of race, gender, and social structure in the Caribbean when HIV hit in the 1980s. HIV impacted people I knew and loved. I volunteered as an AIDS community educator while in graduate school. I had the opportunity to support some early United States Agency for International Development (USAID) consulting work that brought together global stakeholders to discuss addressing the pandemic. In 1991, I successfully applied for a National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded post-doctoral HIV/AIDS



Training Program for Behavioral and Social Scientists jointly sponsored through Emory University School of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The program confirmed the critical need for HIV prevention research and that there was a role for someone like me, with my social science training, in that work."

**How has being a part of the CFAR and CCB contributed to the success of your career?**

"I was a co-recipient of a UNC CFAR Developmental Award (Co-PI with Dr. Betsy Costenbader, an FHI 360 colleague). That small award gave us the opportunity to conduct exploratory research on coordination of services for HIV testing clients in Durham NC. That project informed two subsequent Durham-focused projects: an NIH-funded R21 study and a CDC-funded project, both centered on collaborating with BIPOC queer folx to understand and identify ways to improve their experiences in accessing HIV and STI services. As a CCB member, being part of the meeting dialogs further informed this work.

Serving as Director of the UNC CFAR Developmental Core for 9 years gave me the opportunity to support and work with many early-stage investigators. In my career I was fortunate to have some amazing mentors and supporters, who were key to subsequent successes. Being in a position to support the next generation of HIV researchers was a role I valued over the past decade because I know how important the CFAR support is for ensuring this important work continues."

**Finally, if there was something you could Adapt, Adopt, or Abandon about Community Based Participatory Research, what would it be?**

"I would abandon all notions that community based participatory research is optional or a luxury in the context of health.

I would adapt research ethics models to explicitly acknowledge and incorporate participatory principles.

I would adopt funding criteria that are responsive to and sufficiently flexible to accommodate the economic realities of community leaders, partners, and collaborators engaged in community based participatory research."

**Flex Jonez**



*By Flex Jonez, Executive Director of 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. Alliance*

**How long have you been with the UNC CFAR Community Collaboration Board (CCB)? And what prompted you to join?**

"I have been a part of the CCB since 2017. I was doing a lot of speaking and educating on Trans awareness and Trans wellness within the North Carolina region and was introduced to the CCB by Caressa Harding so I decided to join. People did not know who I was until Dr. Ron Strauss and the CFAR started sharing my name and work in spaces. When I came on board, there were no Black Trans men in the community and they didn't have many Trans people in the community involved as well. Currently there still isn't much of a Trans presence in these spaces, especially for Transmen.

For several years I was involved with the Sexual Freedom Movement in North Carolina and dealing with HIV stigma for years before people start realizing something can be done about the stigma. About a year after joining the CFAR CCB, I established my nonprofit organization 5th Ave Alliance which is an organization who provides assistance to persons in the LGB-Transgender community within the states of North Carolina and South Carolina."

**Has your time with the CFAR contributed to any work that you do in the community?**

**What are you looking forward to seeing in 2024 within the CCB when it comes to Community Based Participatory Research?**

"I am looking forward to the CCB creating more awareness and education around AFAB individuals, people assigned female at birth, or Transmen. Not just awareness and education for our Transwoman. So that's my concern that we give more enlightening information and awareness to the trans community so there is a better understanding of how to support them. HIV is not just a man's virus as it was presented in the beginning of the epidemic, it affects us all. I also think it would be good to stretch outside of just the Raleigh/Durham area with the CFAR. Even across the state because there are a lot of people here in Winston that are unaware of the CFARs. This area has a huge medical industry where a lot of research is done and should be connected to the CFAR."

**What suggestion do you have for the CCB to ensure there is more awareness about Transmen?**

"We need to have more conversations about this issue because once you begin to stop highlighting Trans women with HIV, then you're now accepting the idea that assigned female at birth individuals (AFAB) are susceptible to HIV as well. We are always documented as female instead of Transmen. I think that if there were more awareness, education, and acknowledgement around AFAB, we could be further along with HIV research in the Trans community instead of the focus being on one gender. Documenting the data as AFAB, assigned female at birth, or AMAB, assigned male at birth would be my suggestion."

**What advice would you give other leaders who may be thinking about joining a board or partnering in Community Based Participatory Research?**

"Get very involved in it. Be sure to listen, learn, and be vocal because everyone's voice is valuable. We're all an asset to each other. Don't be afraid to come up with new ideas and share your knowledge and experience. Also, use what you've learned to share with your community."

"Yes, my time with the CFAR has helped a lot since I established 5th Ave. Alliance because one of our focuses is health and wellness. Being a member of the CCB has also contributed to me being involved with Wake Forest Baptist/Atrium Health and Moses Cone as well as with the teaching colleges to help with awareness, HIV stigma and education. As I mentioned before, we don't have many Transmen or Transwomen who will come forward to share and educate mainly because they don't want their business out there. Even though HIV is now considered a chronic illness and we have TV advertisements on testing and PrEP, people are still concerned with stigma and their privacy."

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## Upcoming Event

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### **Minority Health Conference**

February 23, 2024, Chapel Hill

### **CROI 2024**

March 3-6, 2024, Denver CO

### **Society for Behavioral Medicine Annual Meeting**

March 13-16, 2024, Philadelphia PA

### **Biomedical HIV Prevention Summit**

April 19 – 20, 2024, Seattle, Washington

### **International AIDS Conference**

July 22-26, 2024, Munich, Germany

### **US Conference on HIV/AIDS**

Sept 12-15, 2024, New Orleans, LA

### **The Continuum 2024: International Association of Providers of AIDS Care**

June 9-11, 2024, Puerto Rico

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## HIV/AIDS Upcoming Awareness Days

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February 7 - **National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NBHAAD)**

February 28 - **HIV is Not a Crime Awareness Day**

March 10 - **National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day #NWGHAAD**

March 20 - **National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day #NNHAAD**

April 10 - **National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day #NYHAAD**

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