



MESSAGE & MEDIA: Jennifer Farmer '99, managing director for communications at the Advancement Project, a civil rights organization in Washington, D.C., works to share the stories of people who are often marginalized in mainstream media (see page 48).



HOW SHE DOES IT: Farmer, a communications director at a Washington, D.C., nonprofit, blogs frequently about civil rights and the challenges of communicating to a skeptical media at Advancementproject.org/blog.

Focus on people and their stories. I lead with personal stories because it's hard to argue with those. If the issue concerns race, sometimes I'll take race out of the equation, and I just tell what happened. So in Kiera's case, I might say, a 17-year-old student was expelled for a science project gone wrong. She was a model student. She was the kind all parents hope for. And so I start from a very broad place. And when people hear that, they think, "Well, how is that possible? How did that happen?" And then I weave in details about how her mother felt. How her twin sister felt. And at that point,

sometimes people will say, "Well, maybe this person did do something wrong." So then I add a little bit more information to show that it was through no fault of her own. She was curious in a way that we all want our kids to be.

Introduce and discuss the idea of implicit bias. When I'm ready to introduce the idea of structural racism, I start by talking about the role that implicit bias plays in how we react. Everyone has a bias of one form or another. And sometimes we can be acting on those biases without even realizing it, which is what implicit bias is.

Connect people to social contexts, and show why context matters. People often get things wrong, I think, when they look at things only from an individual standpoint, rather than an institutional one. This can work both ways. Often, when people see something like the viral video of the African-American high school girl in South Carolina dragged across the classroom by a white police officer, people will place blame on individuals without also placing blame on the structures that permit that activity to happen. For example, they won't realize that police officers are disproportionately placed in schools that are predominantly African-American and Latino. And they also won't realize that these police officers don't get adequate training for the role. They're trained to enforce a criminal code, and if you place them in a school setting without training, of course you're going to have disastrous results, with or without implicit bias.

Talk openly about the power of media to shape our perceptions. We're all consumers of media, and media influences how we look at one another. I try to get people to think about the information they're receiving rather than just to embrace it.

—INTERVIEW BY KAREN MCCALLY '02 (PHD)

Jennifer Farmer '99: Communicating Against the Grain

In an era of political and cultural polarization, how do you communicate a message on behalf of a group that's often generalized and stereotyped in the mainstream media?

It's a question that weighs on the minds of people on both ends of the social divide, from religious conservatives to social and cultural radicals, and many people in between.

Jennifer Farmer '99, who often introduces herself as "the granddaughter of a pastor and the daughter of an evangelist," makes a living spreading the messages of what she describes as marginalized groups. She's the managing director for communications at the Advancement Project, a civil rights organization based in Washington, D.C. She's worked on behalf of workers who are members of labor unions and young African Americans caught up in the legal system. Since 2013, she's managed an educational and public relations campaign centering on the story of Kiera Wilmot, an African-American mechanical engineering student at Florida Polytechnic University who, as a high school junior, was arrested and charged with two felonies after conducting an unassigned experiment in her science classroom involving common household chemicals.



A New Era for NYC's Chinese Immigrants

In the past generation, two important shifts have taken place in New York City's Chinese immigrant community. First is the decline of the garment industry, a main source of jobs for the many immigrants who arrived poor, and with little knowledge of English. The second is the composition of the immigrant community.

The first Chinese immigrants arriving in New York City after 1965—the year that federal legislation permitted Chinese immigration back into the United States after nearly 80 years of virtually uninterrupted prohibition—were mostly from Taiwan and Hong Kong. The dominant language was Cantonese. Now, new arrivals from China are more diverse than ever before, with Mandarin-speaking Mainland Chinese now eclipsing the earlier Cantonese-speaking Chinese-American community.

As director of workforce development at the Chinese-American Planning Council, **Simon Chiew '02** is helping immigrants as well as businesses navigate the new landscape. Chiew, who was born in Malaysia, and whose family was assisted by a similar organization

when they arrived in the United States, says it's important for new arrivals to extend their lives beyond their immediate communities.

"We want them to integrate outside of their community," he says. "We want them to go to the library, we want them to take the subway, we want them to shop in supermarkets that are not owned by their fellow immigrants. We want them to explore, and

we want them to live and use the resources that New York City has to offer."

The garment industry once made it possible for Chinese immigrants to sustain themselves almost entirely within their own communities. But the sector, which was already eroding through much of the

1990s, was dealt a decisive blow after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

The tragedy left many Chinese employees struggling to find alternative employment. The council has focused much of its job training since then on preparing immigrants for the hospitality and service industries. It's an approach that capitalizes on the rise of a newly affluent class of Chinese who are traveling the

BARRIER BREAKER: "Some of the people who are successful now went through our services to get to where they are," says Chiew. "So they're very aware of the struggle and the barriers."

world and spending large sums of money. By 2020 overseas spending by Mandarin-speaking Chinese is projected to top \$458 billion per year.

The program Chiew runs, the LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton Fundamentals in Luxury Retail program, is a collaboration of the council, the luxury retailer, and the Parsons School of Design. The program, to which Mandarin-speaking immigrants must apply, takes the successful applicants through eight weeks of classroom instruction on subjects from fashion history to retail operations, and a two-week internship at one of the stores. Of the 60 people who have participated in the program since it began in 2014, 80 percent have found employment in stores such as Louis Vuitton, Prada, and Dior.

"Most of our students never saw themselves in luxury retail," says Chiew. "A lot of the people we are working with are severely underemployed or long-term unemployed."

Salina Zhao, an alumna of the program, came to the United States from southern China at the age of 11. Before she began her training, she was afraid to set foot inside a luxury retailer. "I was intimidated," she recalls. "If I can't afford something like that I wouldn't even enter into the store."

As part of the program, Zhao interned at Christian Dior at the Saks Fifth Avenue flagship store. She was hired by Dior right after. She says Chiew prepared her well.

"I think Simon prepares us as much as possible for everything that we're going to experience in the future. He will spend an hour or two going through our résumé, making sure it's as professional as possible, and going through even small details like how we dress up and how to professionally answer the questions."

Now she looks forward to career advancement within the company. "I think this program really gave us a huge opportunity to get into a different environment," she says, describing the training experience as a valuable shortcut into a world that would otherwise be hard to reach.

Chiew says successful alumni are part of what will help the council's training programs to continue.

"Some of the people who are successful now went through our services to get to where they are. So they're very aware of the struggle and the barriers," he says. "Our focus on building our alumni network and having them contribute either with funding or with their time has really improved. People do want to give back." **R**

—MAYA DUKMASOVA '12



NOMINATED: Recordings by Eastman alumni Maria Schneider, Kristian Bezuidenhout, and John Fedchock (from left) are among those nominated for 2016 Grammy Awards.

In the News

Eastman Counts Seven Grammy Nominees

One Eastman professor and six Eastman alumni have been nominated for 2016 Grammy Awards, which will be presented on February 15 in Los Angeles:

Kristian Bezuidenhout '01E, '04E (MM), fortepianist and pianist: Best Classical Instrumental Solo for *Mozart: Keyboard Music, Vol. 7* (Harmonia Mundi); Best Classical Solo Vocal Album for *Beethoven: An Die Ferne Geliebte; Haydn: English Songs; Mozart: Masonic Cantata* (Harmonia Mundi).

Martha Cluver '03E, soprano, and **Eric Dudley** '01E, tenor, of the ensemble Roomful of Teeth: Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance for *Render* (New Amsterdam Records).

John Fedchock '85E (MM), trombonist,

bandleader, and arranger: Best Arrangement, Instrumental or A Cappella, for "You and the Night and the Music" from *Like It Is* (Summit Records).

Bob Ludwig '66E, '01E (MM), recording engineer: Best Engineered Album, Non-Classical, for *Sound & Color* by Alabama Shakes; *Sound & Color* was also nominated for Album of the Year.

Paul O'Dette, professor of lute and of conducting and ensembles at Eastman: Best Opera Recording for *Steffani: Niobe, Regina Di Tebe* (Erato) by the Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, with O'Dette conducting.

Maria Schneider '85E (MM), jazz composer and bandleader: Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album for *The Thompson Fields* (ArtistShare); Best Arrangement, Instru-



Better Basketball

Former Yellowjacket basketball star **John DiBartolomeo** '12 (with the ball) had a chance to post up against one of the professional game's all-time greats this fall, when his Israeli professional team took on sure-fire Hall of Famer Kobe Bryant and the Los Angeles Lakers in an exhibition preseason game at Staples Center in Los Angeles. DiBartolomeo and the Maccabi Haifa lost 126-83 in the game, which was part of a U.S. tour for the team.

ments and Vocals, for arrangement of “Sue (Or in a Season of Crime),” by David Bowie, from his retrospective album *Nothing Has Changed* (Columbia/Legacy).

Smithsonian Recognizes Rudolph Tanzi '80 for Ingenuity


Rudolph Tanzi '80 is among the best known and most accomplished scientists in the field of Alzheimer's disease research. In its annual announcement of top American innovators, *Smithsonian* magazine named Tanzi, the Joseph P. and Rose F. Kennedy Professor of Neurology at Harvard and the director of genetics and aging research at Massachusetts General Hospital, as among 12 winners of its American Ingenuity Award.

Late in 2014, Tanzi and Doo Yeon Kim, also of Harvard, developed a new means of tracking the progress of Alzheimer's and experimenting with new treatments. According to the citation in *Smithsonian*, the new technique, a cell culture dubbed “Alzheimer's in a dish,” “is considered the most persuasive and useful laboratory model yet invented of the neurodegenerative disease. It offers researchers a chance to both track the course of Alzheimer's in unprecedented biochemical and genetic detail, and to quickly and cheaply test thousands of potential treatments that might block or at least slow its malign progress.”

Earlier in 2015, *Time* magazine acknowledged the discovery by naming Tanzi one of the world's 100 Most Influential People.

A National Honor for a Pediatric Pioneer

Robert Brent '48, '53M (MD), '55M (PhD), '88 (Honorary) is the winner of the 2015 Gustav O. Lienhard Award, a national honor recognizing outstanding achievement in improving health care service. The award is given annually to one person by the National Academy of Medicine.

Early in his career, Brent conducted pathbreaking research on environmental risk factors for birth defects. His research provided groundwork for much modern understanding of the nature and degree of risk to the developing fetus from radiation, as well as from various drugs and chemicals. Brent has also played an educational role, offering free counseling to pregnant women about the risks for most of his 60-plus-year career. Brent is the Louis and Bess Stein Professor of Pediatrics at Sidney Kimmel Medical College in Philadelphia. 

Top Teacher

Brian Alegant '93E (PhD) is earning high marks for his work as a professor of music theory at Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

Alegant, who has taught at Oberlin since 1996, was named this fall as one of four U.S. Professors of the Year by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, or CASE, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Representing undergraduate baccalaureate institutions, Alegant was one of four professors selected from nearly 400 nominees for the national honor.



According to Oberlin, he's the first music professor to be honored in the 35-year history of the award.

A respected theoretician whose research interests include performance and analysis, pedagogy, and twelve-tone music, Alegant has published widely in peer-reviewed journals.

His book on the twelve-tone music of Luigi Dallapiccola (published by the University of Rochester Press) has also been well regarded by peers and colleagues.

Known for cultivating music theory classes that are notoriously challenging—and students who sign up on wait lists to take part in them—Alegant routinely earns accolades from students for his brilliance, passion, fairness, and wit.

“The whole idea for me,” he has said, “is to put the student in charge of his or her own learning.”

At Oberlin, Alegant also serves as chair of the conservatory's Division of Music Theory, a position that makes him a mentor to Oberlin's one-year postdoctoral instructors, each of whom has gone on to full-time work in higher education.

While a doctoral student at the Eastman School of Music, Alegant received the school's Teaching Assistant Prize in 1985.

CASE launched the program in 1981, and since then has recognized 1,200 teachers at state and national levels. Awards are given in four categories: undergraduate, master's, doctoral, and community college institutions.

Nominees are judged on their influence and involvement with undergraduate students, their approaches to teaching and learning, their contributions to undergraduate education in their institution, community, and profession, and support from colleagues and students.

The entries are judged by top U.S. instructors and other leaders in education.

CASE BY CASE: Oberlin music professor Brian Alegant '93E (PhD) was named Professor of the Year by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.



Patriotism Rocks

So much for sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. The rock band Madison Rising, which has opened for Aerosmith and Lynyrd Skynyrd and this past Veterans Day shared the stage with Dropkick Murphys and Trace Adkins, says it's built on patriotism and traditional American values.

"We need to come together as a nation and just believe in great things, be positive," says drummer **Sam Fishman** '10, a founding member of the band, which puts its hard-rock, post-grunge energy behind anthems such as "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "God Bless America." "To spread that uplifting message using these songs, it's a higher calling. It's more than just music."

Madison Rising released its self-titled debut album in 2011, followed by last summer's *American Hero (RED)*, with originals including "Hallowed Ground II" and "Reflection (PTSD)." Its audio and video release of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in 2012 catapulted the foursome into the national spotlight. Partnered with Concerned Veterans of America and the Young Marines National Youth Organization, the band's 70-city tour continues into 2016.

The band wants to be perceived as inspirational, not confrontational, as it promotes the principles of liberty, independence, small government, and personal responsibility. Its tagline: Music with meaning.

"We've had people call us crazy right-wingers, but if you talk to us, you realize that's not true," says Fishman, who lives in New Jersey and is a drum instructor when he's not touring. "We have our beliefs, and they tend to resonate with conservative audiences, but we're really about respecting one another. We want to make people feel better about standing up for what they believe in."

Given its strong following among military, veterans, and first-responder groups, Madison Rising has launched Madison Rising

Shows for Heroes, a nonprofit that will allow the band to double the number of charity shows they've been able to do in the past. Lead singer Dave Bray served in the U.S. Navy as a corpsman for the 2nd Battalion/2nd Marines; other members are lead guitarist AJ Larsen and bassist Tom DiPietro.

Entrepreneur and GoDaddy.com founder Bob Parsons, a former Marine, introduced the band at a 2013 show with Steppenwolf in Scottsdale, Arizona. The group had impressed him with "a rendition [of "The Star-Spangled Banner"] that I think is one of the most exceptional songs I have ever heard in my life," Parsons told the crowd. "These guys take it to a whole new level." Calling Madison Rising his "favorite group," he sent the musicians a \$10,000 check days later to show his support.

Fishman, who majored in music and took lessons, mostly in jazz, at the Eastman School of Music, dabbled in funk, reggae, and "everything I could get my ears on" before learning about the formation of Madison Rising on social media. He found out about the band's focus after his audition.

"I was absolutely into it," he recalls. "My grandfather served in the Marines at the Battle of Iwo Jima. If he were alive and seeing what I was doing with this band, he would be ecstatic."

A former lead drummer for the University's jazz ensemble, Fishman credits his undergraduate music history and theory classes, as well as impromptu jam sessions on nights and weekends with Eastman students, for preparing him to perform at his current level. The band has been featured in NFL half-time shows, the opening ceremony of the 2014 Special Olympics, and other events with tens of thousands of spectators.

Says Fishman: "It's such a comforting feeling to know people are being affected by our music in such a positive way." 

—ROBIN L. FLANIGAN

AN AMERICAN BAND: Drummer Fishman (second from right) says he and the members of the band Madison Rising built their music on patriotism and traditional American values.