

## AMSC's Byrd and Todd Call for Renewed Commitment to Environmental Justice



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Atlanta Metropolitan State College professors, Joshua Byrd and Curtis L. Todd's, article "*In Search of Mental Wellness and Justice: The Struggle for Environmentally Safe Communities Continues*," is featured in the May 2016 edition of *ACJS Today*, a publication of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. The article posits that while the ramifications regarding the physical health of individuals living near hazardous waste and industrial pollution have been questioned and debated, the mental health of individuals subjected to these environmental stressors is arguably an area that needs more investigation. Further, the mental wellness of these victims continues to be compromised by psychological distress resulting from the impact of environmentally hazardous neighborhoods. The article calls for a reawakening of this important social justice issue, the need to pursue sustainable ways to support communities, seek corrective measures and provide better advocacy for these marginalized members of society who often lack the organizational prowess and political power to combat this unrelenting and oppressive practice.

The authors advocate for and recommend an aggressive tri-leveled approach: mental health resources, advocacy, and legal remedies. Echoing the cautionary words of black civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," they also argue that the persistent struggle for environmentally safe communities and the clarion call to add psychological well-being to the litany of deleterious outcomes associated with environmental inequalities should serve as a catalysis to place in check our own socio-economic and political privileges, as well as individual and collective sense of secured justice.

Professor Byrd is a native of Atlanta, Georgia and a Criminal Justice Lecturer in the Division of Social Sciences. He is a former deputy sheriff and an eight-year U.S. Marine Corps veteran. He obtained his B.S. in Criminal Justice from Georgia State University, his M.S. in Criminal Justice from the University of Cincinnati, and his J.D. from North Carolina Central University School of Law. His research interests include environmental justice, the school-to-prison pipeline, and crime prevention through environmental design.

Dr. Todd is an associate professor in the Division of Social Sciences. He provides instruction in social work and criminal justice. His research agenda and interests labor over issues that unfold at the intersections of race, class, culture, politics, and socio-economic inequalities that impact marginalized and overwhelmed individuals and groups. His clinical practice experience in the criminal justice field includes work with aggressive and violent youth, individuals with chronic mental illnesses, death penalty mitigation, individuals deemed incompetent to stand trial, and individuals found not guilty by reason of insanity. He holds advanced degrees from Clark Atlanta University (Ph.D., Social Work Policy, Planning, Administration, and Social Science), the University of Georgia (M.S.W., Social Work) and Albany State University (M.S., Criminal Justice).

The article can be accessed in its entirety at:

[http://www.acjs.org/uploads/file/ACJS\\_Today\\_May\\_2016.pdf](http://www.acjs.org/uploads/file/ACJS_Today_May_2016.pdf)