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Subject: Ten Questions for Faculty Series
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Ten Questions for Faculty Series

The Teaching and Learning Center is pleased to present the *Ten Questions for Faculty Series*. The series is dedicated to helping faculty to stay connected with one another while working remotely. Every week, a faculty member will have the opportunity to answer ten questions about themselves and about navigating the changes brought about by COVID-19. This week, we are pleased to feature Dr. Sonji Nicholas, Professor of Student Life Skills and Sociology.



Dr. Sonji Nicholas
Professor of Student Life Skills & Sociology

Where are you from?

I was born in London, England which is where I spent my first 6 years. After this, my family moved to Jamaica for one year and a half, and then to Nyack, NY, a town located about 45 minutes northwest of New York City. My experiences in all three of these places shaped my upbringing in various ways so I claim all as home.

Which college or university did you attend?

I completed my undergraduate degree at Howard University in Washington, D.C., my Master's at S.U.N.Y. Albany and my Ph.D. at the Graduate School and University Center of C.U.N.Y.

When did you begin teaching at FSW?

I began teaching sociology courses at Edison Community College in 1999 when I first relocated from New York to Naples. For two years, I was an Adjunct Professor on the Lee campus as well as at the Collier site in Immokalee, when courses were offered at Immokalee High School. After a long hiatus, I returned to full-time teaching at FSW in 2018.

What made you become interested in your academic discipline?

I believe my interest in sociology stems from my early experiences with migration and living in three different countries by the age of 8. The adjustments to environment that one makes with such moves likely played a part in sparking my interest in questioning differences in life chances and trajectories of people occurring from one location to the next. Sociology has been a tool I have used to help frame and understand some of the differences I have observed.

What is your favorite food?

I enjoy most seafood and flavorfully prepared vegetarian dishes. Jamaican escovitch red snapper (freshly caught) with rice and peas, plantains, and steamed vegetables is heaven on a plate to me.

If you could have dinner with any historical figure, who would it be and what would you ask them?

One remarkable person who has been on my mind recently is Sarah Breedlove, A.K.A., Madam C.J. Walker, who is thought to be America's first self-made female millionaire. An African American woman born in 1867 to parents who were enslaved in Mississippi, she was the first of her parents' children to be born into freedom. I would ask her about the source of her vision for her life and how she was able to maintain the focus and courage needed to swim against the hostile and oppressive currents of her day, to ultimately reach the heights she did as an entrepreneur, activist, and philanthropist.

What is your favorite local restaurant?

DaRuMa in Naples is one of my favorites.

What new things have you learned or done as a result of COVID-19 & working remotely?

While *physically* distancing is important at the moment, there is really no need to be *socially* distanced from your family and friends given the technology we have at our disposal. I have learned many new ways to virtually connect with my extended family around the world during this time.

What are you doing (exercise, cooking, reading, etc.) to take care of your mental and physical health during social isolation?

I have been biking, jogging (well, mostly walking:-), reading, and becoming aware of so many terms that count as "words" in the official Scrabble Dictionary.

What advice do you have for your colleagues on how to navigate social isolation and changes from COVID-19?

The sooner we embrace science + encourage others to do the same + act accordingly = the sooner we return to some semblance of normalcy.

If you would like to be featured in the *Ten Questions for Faculty Series*, please contact Kelly Westfield, Coordinator of Marketing & Technology for the Teaching and Learning Center: kwestfield@fsw.edu



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