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# CLBB News

A newsletter from the Center for Law, Brain & Behavior

February 25, 2021

## CLBB Highlights



### [Brain Based Justice Reform: Psychiatry, Neuroscience and the Law](#)

3rd Annual Carol W. Taylor Lecture in Psychiatry Grand Rounds  
MGH Dept. of Psychiatry | January 14, 2021

**CLBB Co-Director and Co-Founder Judith Edersheim, JD, MD** presented at the 3rd Annual Carol W. Taylor Grand Rounds, sponsored by the Massachusetts General Hospital Psychiatry Academy.

Dr. Edersheim explained that for centuries, the law has been premised on a now outdated model of mental activity which is derived from a combination of philosophical theories of mind and stereotyped inferences from observed behavior. Modern neuroscience, with its ability to reveal the neurobiologic foundations of human behavior, has begun to influence legal standards, with the potential to revolutionize the law and promote just legal outcomes. This lecture briefly reviewed current legal conceptions of mental activity and the use of case studies to demonstrate how recent discoveries in the fields of adolescent neurodevelopment and the neurobiology of substance use have already begun to advance fairness and equity in the legal system. Watch the lecture [here](#).



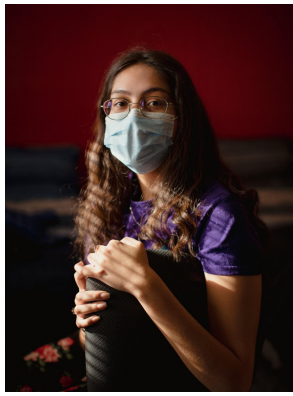
### [Trauma, Truth, and the Scientific Shortcomings of U.S. Asylum Law](#)

McLean Hospital, Perspectives on Trauma Lecture Series | February 17, 2021

On Wednesday February 17, 2021, **CLBB Co-Director and Co-Founder Judith Edersheim, JD, MD** and **CLBB Executive Director Francis Shen, JD, PhD** presented "Trauma, Truth, and the Scientific Shortcomings of U.S. Asylum Law."

The success of an asylum claim relies on the perceived credibility of an asylum seeker's memory. In this presentation, Dr. Edersheim and Dr. Shen discussed a foundational, yet failed assumption, animating U.S. asylum law's approach to credibility--that honest human memory is free of inconsistencies, and that those with histories of trauma are capable of error free autobiographical recall. Dr. Edersheim and Dr. Shen discussed how changes in asylum seekers' narratives over time may not be due to deliberate deception but rather to the nature of human memory itself. The presentation included discussion of current efforts at the Center for Law, Brain & Behavior to leverage memory science for a more nuanced legal approach to credibility assessment in asylum law. To learn more about CLBB's work on immigration and trauma see [here](#).

[A College Program for Disadvantaged Teens Could](#)



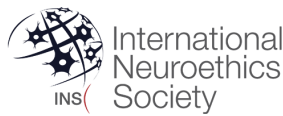
### [Shake Up Elite Admissions](#)

The New York Times | February 18, 2021

**CLBB Advisory Board Member Leslie Cornfeld** was featured in a *New York Times* features story on the Equity Lab, an organization that takes on the nation's challenges of individual, institutional, and systemic inequity.

*Highlight:* "The goal of the pilot program was 'reimagining and expanding the roles and responsibilities of universities,' and encouraging them to pursue star students from underprivileged backgrounds 'with the same enthusiasm and success with which they identify top athletes,' said Leslie Cornfeld, the Equity Lab's founder and chief executive."

## Upcoming Events



### [TODAY! - Scientific Oppression, Biological Reductionism, and the Future of Neurotechnology](#)

The International Neuroethics Society | February 25, 2021 12:00-1:30pm ET

Technologies that record and stimulate the brain are set to transform medical treatment, interpersonal life, and even what it means to be human. But these neurotechnologies may, if we're not careful, continue legacies of harm against people of color, women, LGBTQIA-identifying persons, and people with disabilities. How can we keep neurotechnology from becoming oppressive? What would 'anti-oppressive' brain technology look like?

Join us for a stimulating 90-minute panel discussion featuring three scholars - **CLBB Executive Director Francis Shen**, Dr. Olivia Matshabane, and Jasmine Kwasa - sharing their unique perspectives on the future of neurotechnology and social justice.

This online event, organized by the INS Diversity & Inclusion Task Force, is free and open to all. You must [register](#) in advance to participate.



### [Anxiety and Depression Association of America \(ADAA\) to Hold 41st Annual Conference](#)

Anxiety and Depression Association of America | March 18 and 19, 2021

This two-day, 3D event will focus on resiliency and its relationship to the most urgent issues impacting the mental health of both adults and children--the pandemic, stress, suicide, and working with minority clients. Planned for March 18 and 19, 2021 this year's Conference theme is resilience and recovery in research and in practice.

The 24th Annual Scientific Research Symposium, Resilience: From Research to Practice, is sponsored by Janssen Neuroscience and co-chaired by **CLBB Faculty Member Kerry Ressler**, MD, PhD, and Victoria Risbrough, PhD. The three presentations that comprise this year's Symposium will focus on stress resilience.

To register, contact Lise Bram, ADAA's Deputy Executive Director: [lbram@adaa.org](mailto:lbram@adaa.org). [Registration](#) is limited to credentialed journalists and journalists who have assignment letters on the letterhead of a media organization.

## Faculty Research and News

### [Inspiring Kids to Change the World](#)

National Geographic | January 15, 2021



This article in the *National Geographic* features **CLBB Faculty Member Gene Beresin**, who discusses how to raise an empathetic change-maker.

*Highlight:* "How you can help your child find her special skill. 'You don't necessarily have to take to the streets in a rally, or lead an effort to save a river,' says Beresin, a psychiatry professor at Harvard Medical School. A kid can also write letters to city officials or school leaders, or participate in civic events. 'Understand what their values and missions are,' he says. 'Combine that with the knowledge of their kid's strengths and weaknesses.' Then make suggestions. Can they be a writer? Produce a blog? Take photographs? Change-makers are passionate."



### [Boston Bomber Files Motion Pleading for 'Compassionate Release' From Life Sentence](#)

Boston Herald | February 2, 2021

**CLBB Managing Director Nancy Gertner** was featured in this article regarding Boston bomber Alfred Trenkler. As lead attorney, Nancy Gertner argues that Alfred Trenkler should be let out of prison early because of a coronavirus outbreak at his Arizona lockup and "the jury's anti-gay biases" that put him away for life.

*Highlight:* "Gertner, who is also an author and lecturer at Harvard Law School, recently wrote that prisons are 'Petri dishes for disease' and 'could become incubators' for COVID-19. In her motion, she states that Trenkler's Tucson federal prison 'has left nine hundred prisoners infected, 75% of the population, and nine dead. Compassionate release is warranted on this basis alone.'"



### [Time for Action: HMS Task Force Evaluating How to Combat Racism in MD Program](#)

Harvard Medical School | December 16, 2020

**CLBB Faculty Member** and HMS Dean for Medical Education **Edward Hundert** commissioned the Task Force to Address Racism amid a torrent of national concern and unrest over the unwarranted killings of Black citizens in the United States.

*Highlight:* "'This is the time for concerted action,' Hundert explained. 'We must ask ourselves what actionable steps we can take, especially in the short and medium terms, to become an anti-racist institution at every level. If any good is to come from the horrors of this year, it has to be a deep and sustainable effort to address racism in all its guises, across every aspect of the MD program at HMS.'"



### [District Attorney Rachael Rollins on Short List to Become Next Us Attorney for the District of Massachusetts](#)

Boston Globe | January 17, 2021

Suffolk District Attorney Rachael Rollins has emerged as a finalist for the job of United States attorney for the district of Massachusetts, a post overseeing more than 200 federal prosecutors.

The search committee moved quickly in response to a request from the incoming Biden administration to submit top candidates for US attorney and judicial positions by Jan. 19, a day before his inauguration, explained **CLBB Managing Director Nancy Gertner**, the former federal judge who led the search committee.



### [Op-Ed: How to Be an Effective Altruist When Giving to Charities](#)

Los Angeles Times | December 17, 2020

This op-ed by Lucius Caviola and **CLBB Faculty Member Joshua Greene** discusses the effective altruism movement.

*Highlight:* "But which charities deserve our support? The effective altruism movement, which began with moral philosophers, encourages

people to consider evidence and careful analysis of charities to maximize the benefit of their giving. The need for such analysis is underappreciated. People tend to greatly underestimate how much charities differ in their effectiveness, as research published this year shows. Whether it's saving lives or improving health and well-being, the most effective charities are not, say, just two or three times more effective than other charities. They can be more than 100 times more effective."



### [New PTSD Biotypes Enables Improved Tests, Sheds Light on Divergent Treatments Efficacy](#)

Walter Reed Army Institute of Research | January 14, 2021

**CLBB Faculty Member Kerry Ressler** was featured in this article, discussing how researchers from the PTSD Systems Biology Consortium, led by scientists from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, have identified distinct biotypes for post-traumatic stress disorder, the first of their kind for any psychological disorder.

*Highlight:* "These data set the stage for physicians to link treatments to specific biotypes, providing a blueprint for targeted therapeutics and better patient outcomes," said Dr. Kerry Ressler, consortium member and chief scientific officer of McLean Hospital."



### [30 Years Ago, Romania Deprived Thousands of Babies of Human Contact](#)

The Atlantic | June 23, 2020

**CLBB Faculty Member Charles A. Nelson** and his Bucharest Early Intervention Project (BEIP) was featured in an article discussing the profound impact of institutionalization on social-emotional development. The BEIP study was the first randomized controlled trial to measure the impact of early institutionalization on brain and behavioral development and to examine high-quality foster care as an alternative.

*Highlight:* "As early as 2003, it was evident to the BEIP scientists and their Romanian research partners that the foster-care children were making progress... the researchers announced their results publicly, and the next year, the Romanian government banned the institutionalization of children under the age of 2. Since then, it has raised the minimum age to 7, and government-sponsored foster care has expanded dramatically."



### [Understanding the Perspectives of Seniors on Dementia and Decision-Making](#)

AJOB Empirical Bioethics | December 8, 2020

In a recent study, **former CLBB Research Assistant and current HLS Climenko Fellow James Toomey** sought to understand the perspectives of seniors on when and how the law should intervene in the decision-making of people with dementia.

*Highlight:* "An online survey that asked both closed- and open-ended questions of 236 seniors from around the United States was conducted, along with interviews of 25 seniors at three retirement communities in Brookline, Massachusetts. The results advance the conversation on reform to the legal doctrine of capacity in several ways."

## In the News

### General

[A Conversation With a Federal Judge About the 'Serious, Serious Problems With Our Legal System'](#) | Law and Crime | Feb 18, 2021

[YLS Justice Collaboratory, Department of Correction Form Partnership to Develop Training for Correctional Officers](#) | Yale Daily News | Feb 15, 2021



[At Yale, New Neuroscience Institute to Unravel the Mysteries of Cognition](#) | Yale News | Feb 16, 2021

### *Juvenile Justice*

[Teen Sentenced to Life Without Parole Wins Resentencing](#) | The Indiana Lawyer | Feb 23, 2021

[Making Juvenile Justice More Just](#) | UCI News | Feb 22, 2021

[D.C. May Give People Convicted as Young Adults a Chance at Resentencing](#) | The Appeal | Dec 14, 2021

['It's Like Being in Prison': What's Behind the Rise in School Exclusions?](#) | The Guardian | Jan 30, 2021

[Anne Arundel State's Attorney's Launches Program to Support Child Victims of Traumatic Crimes](#) | Capital Gazette | Feb 2, 2021

[Police Handcuffed & Pepper-Sprayed a 9-Year-Old Girl, the Latest Example of Why They Shouldn't Interact With Kids](#) | Refinery29 | Feb 2, 2021

[Youth Incarceration Fell When California Required Counties to Pay More for Juvenile Detention: New Research](#) | The Journalist's Resource | Feb 2, 2021

### *Elder Justice*

[Emmer Introduces Legislation to Protect Seniors from Elder Abuse](#) | WJHL | May 4, 2020

[Attorney General Becerra Announces Establishment of Division of Medi-Cal Fraud and Elder Abuse](#) | The Appeal | Jan 27, 2021

[Commonwealth's Attorney: Legislation Combating Elder Abuse Advances in Virginia General Assembly](#) | WJHL | Jan 28, 2021

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