



*Communication Matters: The NCA Podcast* | **TRANSCRIPT**

Episode 40 – NCA Center for Communication, Community Collaboration, and Change

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**\*\*Please note: This is a rough transcription of this audio podcast. This transcript is not edited for spelling, grammar, or punctuation.\*\***

**Participants:**

LaKesha Anderson  
Spoma Jovanovic  
Roy Schwartzman  
Kathy Newsom  
Jessica Clifford

*[Audio Length: 0:56:43]*

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**Introduction:**

This is *Communication Matters, The NCA Podcast*.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

Hello, I'm LaKesha Anderson, Director of Academic and Professional Affairs at the National Communication Association and I'm your host on *Communication Matters, the NCA podcast*. Thank you for joining us for today's episode.

Today's episode of *Communication Matters, the NCA podcast* focuses on the NCA Center for Communication, Community Collaboration, and Change or CCCC which is currently hosted by the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. Launched in 2019, the CCCC is aimed at facilitating partnerships with community-based organizations that create sustainable change for underrepresented and/or vulnerable communities through the production and application of communication related scholarship and practice. The Department of Communication at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro is the current host institution for the Center for Communication, Community Collaboration, and Change. The center is working with five community organizations to improve the lives of people in Greensboro, making clear the explicit connections the work has to communication and providing opportunities for curricular and student partnerships.

Joining me today are CCCC Director Spoma Jovanovic, UNC-G Communications Studies Department Head Roy Schwartzman, Corner Farmers Market Manager Kathy Newsom, and CCCC Project Coordinator Jessica Clifford. First, a bit more about today's guests. Spoma Jovanovic is a professor in the UNC-G Department of Communication Studies and director of the CCCC from 2019 to 2020. Dr. Jovanovic was a fellow at the University of California National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement. She researches community, ethics, and civic participation and is particularly interested in research related to social justice. She's the author of



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three books including the forthcoming *Finding Expression in Contested Public Spaces: Paths to Free Speech and Civic Engagement* and has authored numerous book chapters and journal articles. Roy Schwartzman is the professor and Department Head in the UNC-G Department of Communication Studies. Dr. Schwartzman is also an affiliate faculty member of the University's Department of Peace and Conflict studies, the joint School of Nanoscience and Nano Engineering, and the Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies program. Schwartzman researches rhetorical theory and criticism, Holocaust studies, the rhetoric of science and technology, political communication, and poetry. Schwartzman has published more than 120 scholarly articles and book chapters and over 350 poems. Schwartzman is a recipient of more than 20 research awards and 60 literary awards. Hi, Roy, and welcome to the podcast.

**Roy Schwartzman:**

Hi, LaKesha. Glad to be here.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

Kathy Newsom is the manager of the Corner Farmers Market in Greensboro, a community-run marketplace where customers can interact directly with local growers, makers, and bakers. The Corner Farmers Market promotes sustainability and food security in the community. Neighborhood Markets Inc., the parent company of the Corner Farmers Market was the recipient of a cultivate resilient communities grant from the CCCC. The grant funded the expansion of the Growing Green for Greens program which supports the use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP credits at the market. Hi, Kathy. Welcome to the podcast.

**Kathy Newsom:**

Hi, LaKesha. Thanks for having me.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

Jessica Clifford is a graduate student in the Master of Arts program at the UNC-G Department of Communication Studies and is the CCCC Project Coordinator. Clifford's research focuses on community engagement and communication. Clifford has been active in publicly engaged research as an undergraduate and graduate student and has previously presented on activist scholarship at UNC-G. Prior to graduate school, Clifford was a reporter for *Lincoln County News* and *Yes Weekly*. Clifford hopes to apply to doctoral programs in the future and become a teacher and researcher. Hi, Jessica, and welcome to *Communication Matters*.

**Jessica Clifford:**

Hi, LaKesha. Thanks for having me.



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**LaKesha Anderson:**

Let's dive into discussing the CCCC project. Roy, you submitted the proposal that led to UNC-G becoming the inaugural host of the center. Can you provide some insight into the goals you and your department sought to achieve with the Center and why you felt Greensboro would benefit from such a center?

**Roy Schwartzman:**

Sure. For shorthand, we generally have started referring to this as the 4C project. It saves a lot of syllables. But really one of the interesting things that happened is when the call for the proposals for this grant came out, we started getting contacted by colleagues in the field, saying the description of this initiative by the National Communication Association sounds a whole lot like it's kind of your department. And here's why. We have a long record of deep community engagement in our department, but that community engagement is not simply kind of generic service learning types of projects. We tend to be very involved in various areas of civic activism, and the whole nature of our university really has a history in that type of activism. We began as the Women's College of North Carolina. This geographic area right here is a big part of the history of the American Civil Rights movement. And really the whole orientation of this project that NCA initiated which links community engagement with social justice and activism spoke to the types of things that we prioritize as a department and also that we embrace as a university since we are a minority serving institution and have really prioritized not simply diversity but actively cultivating involvement in empowering populations that may not traditionally have been privileged in the existing social system.

So really what we saw in the 4C initiative is something that resonated both at the department level and at the community level. And we also knew that we have on a regular basis a large number of community partners that are doing great work in a lot of areas that we find in recent years often are getting attention as focal points of social justice issues such as expanding access to reasonably priced, nutritious food, such as empowering local communities in decision making, everything from budgeting priorities to expanding local voting rights. And so really in a way when the call came out for this, there was an echo to us at least of what we were all about. And hopefully we can continue to realize that in an invigorated fashion through the efforts of this entire grant initiative.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

Can you also talk more about the value of the center both on campus and in the greater community and how the center helps connect the campus to the community?



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**Roy Schwartzman:**

Yeah. I think that one of the things that's very important about the center is that it really doesn't silo the academic aspect of communication from the applied aspect and the activist aspect of communication. What it does is it positions the department and the communication discipline as a key connecting point between the various types of academic expertise that are available with the backgrounds and the talents of the faculty and also the needs and priorities of the community so that there is not this continual process of community organizations simply having to do all of their own searching for where they can connect with the things that they can leverage from the academic community that will bring a lot of their projects to fruition. In a word, the center becomes a resource for helping us recognize that a lot of challenges that we face in the community are not simply technical or political challenges, but they really boil down to being challenges in communication and that there are things that communication scholars can do to help to ameliorate those and to really catalyze projects that might otherwise have more difficulty getting started and getting some leverage in continuing.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

Jessica, as a graduate student at UNC-G, what can you tell us about the educational experience of working with the center?

**Jessica Clifford:**

Yeah. Thank you, Lakesha. So working with the center has taught me a lot through hands-on experience that you just can't get in the classroom. So my role in the center as project coordinator, I took on many different tasks that have made me a more versatile communicator and has improved my time management skills as well. So some of the work I completed included administrative work like updating the center's website, social media pages, and writing blog posts. I also helped with the research process by doing participant observation of weekly community conversations for the beloved community center which is one of our projects that we are working with this organization and their specific social justice work related to black and brown populations. And so, I've also worked with undergraduate students on creating videos for the center which was a completely new experience for me, especially from the technical side. I also oversaw other class projects related to the center which allowed me to become a mentor for other students. Through such class projects, this experience had not only been hands-on for me but for many other undergraduate and graduate students. So in the Fall and Spring last semesters of 2020 and 2021, I worked with other students, and students also helped with our conversation facilitating for democracy tables. That's another one of our projects which are community conversations, and those are about certain local and national issues that we need to discuss for change to be made. And we even had students in an undergraduate communication leadership class write biographies on the community leaders spearheading the five projects the center has helped fund.



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**LaKesha Anderson:**

The center is working with five Greensboro community organizations. Spoma, you serve as the Director of the center. Can you tell me more about how the center operates? Specifically, how did the center reach out to potential partners and how is it determined which organizations would receive funding from the center?

**Spoma Jovanovic:**

Sure. Let me just say I want to start by acknowledging the National Communication Association. This was a visionary I think program that you put into place. We've been doing this work for a long time, as Roy mentioned. When we go in and work with communities and do research, we lend a certain credibility to the excellent work that they're already doing, and similarly, I think it's worth noting that the National Communication Association has done the same for us. We've been doing this for a long time, as I said, but having the National Communication Association recognize that this is important critical work, the work that the community does and how communication research intersects with that, that's just been a boon for us. I want to say thank you just right off the bat. When we got the grant, we jumped into action, and that wasn't hard. Our faculty have been deeply involved in the community for a long time. So, to give you a sense of what we did, we immediately pooled our resources, and we identified about three dozen organizations and projects that we thought would be really, really good for this grant. But we didn't stop there. We put together a call for proposals. I, as the director, went out and met with community stakeholders all around the city, people at foundations, at non-profit groups, with community activists. We knew most of them, but I met some new people along the way as well and that was great. And from this bounty of contacts, we invited these proposals that really spoke to what you've been hearing already, social justice, sustainability, resilience. How could we build that in our community that has suffered in the past perhaps like other communities? And we got 18 solid proposals. I think this is might be of interest to listeners. We were advised not to send out a call for proposals just widely, just to anybody. But doing so could probably make the process totally unwieldy. So we did send it to all our contacts, and that got shared a bit also. But it was a little bit more focused, and I think it was wise doing it that way. We got 18 exceptionally good proposals. I don't know what to say. We wanted to fund them all.

That was where we started. But we had funding from NCA to select five. So how are we going to do that? Well, we as a faculty decided to do this the way we would like to be treated. We've all applied for grants before. And so we said, okay, we want at the center of our process things like having people have a way to say what they want to say in the way they want to say it. So we had some general parameters, but we tried to leave a lot of room for people to structure their thoughts and ideas in ways that worked for them. We wanted care and compassion to be part of this process. So it wasn't about dinging people because they didn't put it in the right format or didn't say it the way we want it said or anything like that. And we knew that it didn't have to be lengthy.



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Our community partners are extremely busy. We know that. And so we tried to, we asked them to do something short and get to the point. We had conversations with them so it wasn't that we didn't know the details of their proposal as well. But what was fun to do also was to bring in undergraduate students, community members, retired faculty. We had a review team that included all these people. Activists, people that did not submit a proposal but that were also people who had received grants and who were quite active in the community. We brought them all together and we had different teams. They had a scorecard we developed to help us. But mostly, we had structured conversations that really laid out an opportunity for us to think about where would the greatest impact be for building connections in our community, for lifting up the voices in our community that may not have been heard previously quite so loudly, and that would lead our city and our community in directions that we thought were really helpful to I guess enact democracy.

And when we think about democracy, we think about full participation by people, making decisions and having agency over how their fate rolls out. That was very important to us. So we got students involved from the get-go and wanted to talk to them about how important that was to us. And they got to work in these intergenerational teams which is wonderful. After we got a ton of feedback from that team, we went back to our faculty and our graduate students and got more feedback. How could we integrate the work of our community partners that we would select into courses, into internships, kind of the things that Jessica was just talking about? And what did they think about the projects? And again, where did we think we would have good impact? How could we boost our local economy? Things like that. And then we made the difficult decisions. And I want to just say we're delighted with the five grantees that were selected. You heard about a couple of them. Beloved community center, neighborhood markets and Kathy Newsom's here to talk more about that, learning circles, democracy tables, and the Guilford Urban Farming Initiative. These are just exceptional projects that we couldn't be more proud of. But we also were saddened that there were 13 other projects and programs that were also deserving. And so we made the decision to reach out to all of them and say, hey, we're not going to be able to fund you but we are here and we will be here for a long time and we can provide support in all kinds of ways and we can go after other internal grants at our university and external grants. And let us know how we can help you, whether that's in pieces of their program, maybe not the whole thing and maybe not doing all the research but maybe having a class with service learning students or participating with them in other kinds of ways. And we have, and that's been very, very satisfying as well. So all of that is to say that we took very seriously how we wanted to select partners and how we could reach out in ways that would be beneficial for everyone. The partnership feature was the most important I would say to us that we see our relationship with our community partners as ones that won't end when the grant cycle is over. These are deep, deep relationships that we are so proud of and excited to continue for many, many years to come.





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**LaKesha Anderson:**

You mentioned that we have one of the community partners here with us today. But before I ask them about their work, Spoma, can you talk more broadly about the work of all the community partners as well as how the center supports their work?

**Spoma Jovanovic:**

The work we do operates on many different levels. So for instance, there's a faculty partner that has been teamed up, at least one, with every community partner that has received funds from us. So we participate certainly in gathering research, and we are writing and many of us have been publishing already or in some stage of publication about that. But interestingly, we also get involved in the actual programming aspects with our community partners. So the faculty are experts in communication around which these projects pivot. And so their expertise has been I think valuable in planning, in reorganizing after COVID. Okay? Which required kind of a rethinking and a re-looking at what we were going to do. We've also been able to bring in students. As I said, that remains something very important to us. How do we one involve 1) students to prepare them for a life of civic engagement, of activism, of advocacy? And our community partners are all doing that. And so we really look for connections to have our students, again, whether they're making a video, whether they're handing out surveys. Some are even facilitating conversations. And so it's been really exciting to see some of that. Our faculty and our community partners have been able to network with one another. So we don't keep our, at least I hope so. We'll see what Kathy says. We try not to keep our community partners separate from one another. I mean they're in our community. The work that they do connects to things that others are doing. So just a quick story. I was walking my dog, met one of our grantees walking her dog. I didn't even know she lived near me. We ended up in her backyard. Came up with a project that connected her project at the library with one of the farming initiatives. And so I mean this is the kind of thing that we're able to do. And I think in doing so, the center is really about is amplifying the voices, building on the collaborations, and really allowing or brokering whatever connections that we can. So we made some videos of all our grantees, not just for us to showcase on our website, though I must say we do, but for them to use. We know that they're going to go after other grants, and I think our research, these videos, all these kinds of materials can be helpful to them in doing that. And that's what we want to make sure that the things that we're doing have benefit for the community. Always at the center and always first for our center is the community partners.

The research I don't want to forget because that's, again, our research, their research, all of that is connected whether it's for publication oftentimes on the part of faculty members or grants or getting more volunteers, other things for the community partners is really very, very important. We've also, the center has hosted a number of public events. And we were going full steam ahead, and COVID hit. Had to rearrange again. But we've had panel discussions, special events, film screenings and discussions. And I think one of my favorites was how to start a podcast. What



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we found out from one of our community partners is that they wanted to start one, didn't really know how. And we thought, wow, that's interesting. So we actually brought in one of our unfunded proposals. They were on the podcast to talk about how to do a podcast. And so that was really fun. Again, bringing in different people, showing how it can be done, and making connections with each other for some programming. And finally, again, partnerships. This is the long term, this is the game changer for a community. And so we've been brainstorming, for instance, on how we might continue to fund graduate students to be liaisons with our community partners so that we can continue the work. I mean we can continue in all kinds of ways with or without funding, but we want to see how we can embed these things more deeply. And we know that the funding has made a huge difference. So we don't want to discount that. And how can we continue with that? What are the different ways that we might continue with the faculty research or move it on to student research? And I guess this is the overview of the kinds of things that we're doing at the center that we are so delighted and proud to be able to do as a result of the funding from NCA.

**LaKeshia Anderson:**

Thank you for being here with us today, Kathy. I'm really excited to hear about the work you're doing with Corner Farmers Market. Can you please tell us a bit more about your organization and how it serves the greater Greensboro community?

**Kathy Newsom:**

Yeah. We are a neighborhood-based farmers market. We were established about 10 years ago and started with five farmers setting up in a restaurant parking lot, a place where they were already delivering produce in that on Saturday mornings the owner just said, why don't you guys open up your trucks and sell whatever else is on there? And I think nobody really foresaw quite how big we would grow. But this year, we far surpassed the 40 vendor limit that we had kind of given ourselves for that parking lot, and we just two weeks ago moved to a significantly larger space. The pandemic I think actually drove home for people the importance of community markets. It's a place where people connect, and that connection was more important than ever. Going to a farmers market is a lot different than going to a grocery store because we're only open for three hours so you're very likely going to see your neighbors rather than going to the 24-hour Walmart. You probably wouldn't. But it also drives home some of the things that we talk about all the time as farmers markets, about the importance of local foods and that farmers markets are an essential food source. Sometimes you can drive by farmers market, and it looks like a festival. And we really had to communicate to local and state government that we were an essential food source that should be allowed to stay open along with grocery stores when other things were shattered with the pandemic. And we were also able to provide food when the grocery stores weren't just out of toilet paper but they were also out of meat sometimes and California was on fire and there were lots of distribution challenges early on in the pandemic. But we were always able to show up with the locally grown produce and meats and things like that. So it's been a very interesting





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year, and honestly, the help of UNC-G's communication studies department has really helped way more than we thought it possibly could.

**LaKeshia Anderson:**

Can you please elaborate on how receiving funding and resource support through the center has advanced your organization's mission?

**Kathy Newsom:**

Yeah. The grant that we applied for, we have a program at our market that doubles SNAP benefits. And if you're not familiar with SNAP, it's the program that used to be called food stamps. And the program had grown and grown over the years. And so we needed help with the fundraising part of that. And so thank goodness, we brought them on when, or they brought us on, we partnered up when we did because, boy, more people are receiving SNAP than ever in our community now. And so before the pandemic hit, I thought, oh, they'll come in and make some nice brochures for us. That's what communications is all about, right? Kind of like advertising. But really they had so much more of a methodical approach to it. Before the pandemic hit, we had already sat down with SNAP users our vendors, potential donors, and we really got feedback that was instrumental in the way we would communicate going forward. We found that when we talked to donors particularly at our market which is in a very economically diverse area, the folks that were likely to give didn't think that there were folks that were likely to need the support in our surrounding area. They were like, oh, we're all fine here, right? And that couldn't be further from the case. And so in a lot of our communication, we really put that forward. Like hey, this is the person that's sitting next to you at the PTA. This is your friend's daughter who just got divorced. These are people you know, the waitress at the restaurant. These are folks that are using these programs. So that really helped us kind of steer the way we would communicate with donors. And just having extra feet on the ground and ears in the market was really helpful as we kind of shifted gears at the beginning of the pandemic. People were so scared to be in person even in an outdoor market like ours, and our representative from the communication studies helped us come up with the idea of doing a drive-through and helped us get that up and running online. And just having those extra ears and methodical research was just, it couldn't have come at a better time.

**LaKeshia Anderson:**

In the past year, both racial unrest and the COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for universities and organizations because of the cancellation of in-person classes and changes to community engagement programs. Spoma, can you speak to how the past year's events have impacted the work of the center, if at all?



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**Spoma Jovanovic:**

Yeah. Well, interestingly, Greensboro, North Carolina where we are is really at the epicenter of these what I call two crises. Of course, COVID-19 hit the entire world, and it hit the South particularly hard. We have a political climate here that is dominated by conservative politicians who questioned some of the approaches, and even with masks, there's been some reluctance by minority groups, understandably based on historical facts, to get the vaccine. So we are wrestling with that as we've had to cancel in-person sessions. Right now, in fact, our city council meetings were, of course, in person like they were everywhere. And then they went to a virtual format for 18 months. And I'm telling you this story is illustrative of just how it's rolling out. So they were virtual for 18 months. Finally opened up so people could go and one meeting, and now they're back to virtual because now we have the delta variant, right? I mean so this constant change and how are we going to manage this I think has been a challenge. And I'll get into this. Our community partners have been fabulous. But it's not just COVID.

So we had the George Floyd episode here in our country which really highlighted racial injustice across the country, but that is nothing new to Greensboro sadly. We have our own George Floyd. In September of 2018. Marcus Smith was a man with some mental health challenges. He was roaming the streets after a major folk festival, asking the police for help. He wasn't arrested, didn't have any weapons. But he was hogtied and he died. And this was a terrible episode that is still unresolved. The community has been saying, we cannot continue this way, our policing needs some changes and we need to say we're sorry and we need to do something to help the Smith family. And that, again, it's all in progress. I mean, in fact, this unfortunate, tragic happening may be moving its way to the U.S. Justice Department. I mean this is what I'm saying. We are here at the center. We see these things, we feel them, we know them. So all of this has meant that I think our community partners and our faculty and our students have to really examine what is happening, reveal the truth of what's going on, be compassionate and caring to people who may be suffering. We need to be creative and persistent in providing opportunities, whether that's for rolling out programs or for inviting people in and really paying attention to what others need, not what we want to get done. Hopefully, we can make those things come together, but we really have to be thinking of other people and really the tremendous suffering that we have witnessed here.

So several of our grantees, of course, moved their programs online, which had some very interesting, different, sometimes positive results in terms of wider, of course, wider reach. But let's face it. There are also some things that were not as good when programs go online, just like when our classes go online. Sometimes the level of engagement is different, maybe not as robust as we might like. There's good and bad. But again, the community partners and the faculty tried to roll with it. Our food focused projects, as Kathy mentioned, I think what she didn't say in her humbleness is that they were the champions of our community at a time when we really needed



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champions. She's right. Food was important, and getting food and helping farmers, helping boost our local connections and economy, really, really important. But most important was that an opportunity to go somewhere outside to be able to see people and to have some interactions. And again, as we're facing that going forward into the Fall, I mean I'm fearful of, like I'm sure many people are, are we going back to having to stay at home? And the market has been an incredible opportunity to still, I don't know, do something as much as normal as we can get to. And they've been really, really tremendous. So I think that, like everyone, we are not done with COVID and the impact of it. We are not done with the racial injustices that we have been experiencing. But I think the community here, more and more people are prepared to do the hard work necessary to get us through, and I think that's a bright light in all of this.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

Kathy, I understand that the Corner Farmers Market began a drive-through program to offset pandemic related concerns. Can you talk more about the challenges the pandemic created in serving the community and how you've worked through those?

**Kathy Newsom:**

The challenges were huge for us. We had farms that had farm workers that got sick and had to shut down. In this area, folks can be pretty aggressive about mask wearing, and we had to be aggressive right back, which was difficult because we are outside. But there were times when the numbers were so high that we did mandate that to enter the premises, you had to wear masks and that was really challenging. We basically had bouncers at our market, which is not the friendly welcome you want to have. But yes, the drive-through, which is still going on and very, very popular, was a way that folks who had community supported agriculture, CSA, memberships were able to order those ahead. They were able to order from all of our vendors just the things that they would miss in their weekly food menu if they weren't able to access. And it really made a difference. Not only did our market never close, which most farmers markets did have a period that they closed, we also made it so that if a farmer didn't feel comfortable being in the market that they were able to still sell their product through the online service. So we really tried to meet everybody where they were. And I don't want to brag, but it has really worked out. And I think that communicating some of the things about supply and demand and the importance of local foods and the importance of a market that can provide. We had a lot of folks that were kind of using our market as their side hustle that they would make pound cakes on the weekend and sell them at the market but they really had another job. Well, some of those jobs dried up. And so we became their main hustle. And because our traffic continued to grow, we were able to help them make ends meet and stay financially viable. So all of that in addition to expanding significantly the Green for Greens program that doubled SNAP, we feel like that we were able to meet the needs of our community but also communicate that we were able to do that which was really important because so many things did change during this past year.



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**LaKesha Anderson:**

Jessica, as we've discussed, the past couple of years have been an interesting time, especially to be in school. What is the greatest lesson you've taken from working with the center during this time?

**Jessica Clifford:**

To me, the greatest lesson I've learned is the importance of partnerships. And I know many have already discussed this, but these partnerships that we already have here through the grant project where university faculty, students, community organizations, local activists are working together, I think that is the biggest thing that I've learned is in times of crisis such as the ongoing pandemic and protesting of national practices of policing in the summer of 2020 and ongoing as well prove that when people have resources and skills, those must be shared to build strong coalitions for change. As Gestalt theory would suggest, we are stronger together than we are separately. And I think that is the type of work that we're trying to do here. Create connections for sustainable grassroots change for many local initiatives, such as Kathy has mentioned, food security, also local democracy, and education.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

The center's two-year funding period will come to an end this year. In light of that, we're planning for a larger discussion about the center, its goals, and outcomes at the NCA 107th annual convention in November. In advance of that conversation, Spoma, could you share the outcomes you're most proud of achieving at the center?

**Spoma Jovanovic:**

Oh, yes. Thank you, thank you. I'd love to talk about what we're proud of and what's happened. And we're excited about sharing that at the NCA convention to be sure. So social change doesn't happen overnight. It doesn't happen because of a one grant. But it happens when we have this long-term commitment and we have these rare and unique opportunities as we did with the NCA grant to do something different. It happens in response to crises, as we've experienced. So some of the things that have come out of this that stand out for me, and I'm sure there are other things that will come out so I'll be excited to continue talking about this with other folks, but for instance, we've had conversations about serious matters in our community, things like voting in a highly gerrymandered area, policing and justice—What does that mean? What does that look like?—and housing and the increasing number of people facing eviction as well as high rental costs. We've had those conversations through the democracy tables, involving hundreds of people. We have more conversations coming up. Those are conversations, what's really exciting, that were initiated by and carried out by people. In many communities, those are conversations started, initiated by politicians, usually to fulfill some check mark about community engagement without much afterwards. And I think the difference here of people coming together and listening to each



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other with really I have to say diverse, divergent, very different viewpoints but in a process that has worked. We used a model similar to living room conversations but different for our community. And people really heard and listened to each other. And those ideas are not just staying among them, which is important, but they're being funneled up to our elected leaders so they can really see. Exhibits are being planned at our Greensboro History Museum which is our community partner on this. And I cannot be more proud. I cannot say enough that I hope that this will continue to be the model for our city as we go forward. We've had many times where we've come together to try and discuss things that hasn't worked so well. So this one at least has proven to be something that that can work. I imagine that we will be talking more and more about food, for instance, in one of the future tables. What does that mean? How do we get it? How should we get it? How should we be dispersing it? And certainly, some of the work that our community partners have done in there will be really valuable.

So also, I think, and again this kind of bridges what Kathy has said and Jessica and Roy, that we have been able to support food access in a way that also supports people and that is something to be very proud about. I mean we don't get to take credit for it over at UNC-G and the faculty. We get to take credit by standing behind and supporting people like Kathy who have done incredible work. And also, in a new farm that's been started on the east side of our town which has primarily African-American farmers, where we've used this term food desert but our faculty member Etsuko Kinefuchi wants to call it, no, it's not food desert. It's food apartheid. Like we don't have grocery stores on the side of town where black people live. We don't have the same abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables. And so having a market and a garden that supports that has been something remarkable, and I think will again be long-lasting. And so very proud about that. We've also been able to introduce through learning circles some successful free lifelong learning opportunities, again, in this very democratic fashion where people help people. It's not designed to be like college where somebody's the expert in providing some information but really where people learn from each other about issues and topics that are important to them, whether that's about racial equality was in one of the topics and also, mindful living and some other things. And in that process, they're also gaining digital literacy skills that have been missing for many of the people who still don't have computers in their homes. So that's been very exciting. I think also building on our department's commitment to the notion of and value of storytelling and narratives, we've been able to begin work, continue work, and we're going to initiate some new work on stories and capturing the experiences of people who have experienced injustices so that we can highlight the need for some truth telling and reconciliation that is an ongoing process, again, not just in our community but in communities across the country. COVID has certainly revealed to us most starkly that facts are not enough to change anybody's views, opinions, or behaviors. We know that. If it were, we would not probably be facing some of the challenges and difficulties we are right now. So we're going to be working, on continue working on this storytelling





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project to address health challenges, racial injustice that can hamper growth in a community when we don't share them. So we want to share their stories.

We're also proud that we've been able to engage nearly I would say nearly all 500 of our undergraduate majors and graduate students in our grantee programming. We may have missed a couple along the way, but most of them have had some touch with some of these projects and understand how important it is for them when they leave UNC-G to remain involved in their communities in ways that they can support the kinds of programs that really lead to positive social change, whether that makes them better citizens or agitators or supporters for justice. We are looking forward to the impact that that will have long term. So I think it's pretty obvious that the NCA grant has been a game changer for our department. We started off early on talking about how we are seen. I think we are seen differently even in our own department about what we can do, what we can accomplish in collaboration with our community. But also, our university has seen us a little bit differently, has really I think been able to hone in on some of the tremendous work that's been done grounded in social justice, grounded in sustainability, grounded in the things that we know are important. And I wanted to just mention, our department mission statement I think reflects a lot of what NCA is about. Our mission statement is short and a lot of times we don't take these very seriously. But I think it's important. We say, we teach and research communication to connect people, create change, and work toward a just world. And I like to think that our mission extends, of course, to our students but far beyond that, more broadly to our community so that when we as faculty or students work alongside people like Kathy Newsom who's here today or the people who are not here today, Glenn Perkins, Joyce Hopson-Johnson, Beth Sheffield, and Paula Sieber, those are our main contacts. They're not here physically, but they drive work that makes the world more just, and that justice is visible in very tangible ways. Our faculty, when they work, when they research and write, they do far more than those activities, right? So Dr. Kinefuchi, she puts on her rubber boots, and she's digging in the garden. That's important that they're there. Being there matters. Dr. Simon and Dr. Poulos spend evenings and Saturdays in conversation online and in person at democracy tables. Dr. Marianne LeGreco has worked with Kathy Newsom, sitting at the weekly markets, talking with people and really soliciting their views and ideas. This is essential. Jessica Clifford mentioned she's been attending weekly meetings, community meetings that bring together people who look a lot different than her to talk about issues affecting them and how we all need to grapple with that. That kind of talk demonstrates that we do more than talk about stuff. We walk the things that we talk about, right? We learn from our community partners, and that in turn is used to make what we do in the classroom better, which I got to believe will make the world better, more ethical, more just, and more kind. That's a lot to be putting on the shoulders of faculty, but it's a lot of what our faculty wants to do. And I think our students too are seeing the value and the benefit of what it means to be active in their own communities.





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**LaKeshia Anderson:**

Roy, you had a vision for the center and brought it to fruition. How will your department continue this type of social justice and community partnership work going forward?

**Roy Schwartzman:**

Yeah. First of all, I want to point out that in any of these sorts of collaborative efforts with the community, we always have to think about vision itself being part of that collaborative effort. So it's less a matter of our department or even the field of communication having a specific set of objectives, but rather really the major agenda is simply to continue collectively improving the process of programs reaching fruition that assist in achieving, we talked about the departmental mission that Spoma talked about but also there are missions that each of our community partners have. And I think really the long-term sustainability of the center's activities is to continue finding and pushing forward the intersections between those missions and finding concrete ways that we can transform the mission into practices that are realized on a continuing basis in the community. So really it's less a matter of us having something specific that we say has to be done this way but finding ongoing ways to engage in a productive process that continues the mutual benefits to the community and to the department and more largely to the institution.

Let me also mention in terms of continuing efforts in the future a few little plugs if you will. One is, of course, related to the National Communication Association itself, that for our audience members who might be interested not just in further examining these things that we're talking about in the program today but perhaps in doing some version of these sorts of efforts in their local communities, at the National Communication Association convention in Seattle on Wednesday, November 17th from 1 PM to 5 PM, there is a special program that is devoted to our cultivate resilient communities 4C grant and how that can serve as a basis for energizing similar efforts elsewhere. So there is a great opportunity for catalyzing these efforts elsewhere. And that's Wednesday, November 17th, 1 PM to 5 PM at the National Communication Association convention. For further details on ongoing developments in the 4C project here, one could visit our website for the center which has a convenient URL of CCCC, that's four C's in a row, CCCC.UNCG.edu. And that is regularly updated with new stages of projects that are reaching fruition, and also, it is a source of documenting the activities as we go. So that is where people can actually see some of the videos that both Jess and Spoma have referred to. So really as far as the overarching idea of the 4C project, it is this whole concept of talking about missions of various communication departments that, of course, interface with the larger issues of social responsibility that the National Communication Association really energizes and I think has become rededicated to over recent years and finding ways that that then is mirrored in community organizations that have been pursuing these types of objectives often for very long periods of time. And there are always opportunities for further collaborations and for deepening collaborations that currently exist.



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**LaKesha Anderson:**

Thank you for joining me today on *Communication Matters*. NCA is proud to have supported the UNC-G Department of Communication Studies as the inaugural host of the Center for Communication, Community Collaboration, and Change. I hope that you've enjoyed learning about the CCCC and its impact in Greensboro. I hope you will consider how to apply these principles and strategies discussed today to your research and in your communities.

**NCA News:**

In NCA news, if you missed our second conversation with NCA leadership in August, you can watch a recording of it on NCA's YouTube page. The video includes brief updates about issues that are relevant to NCA members including 2021 NCA convention plans updates from the most recent executive committee meeting, the search for a new executive director, and the status of multiple task forces and other initiatives that the leadership is undertaking. Visit NCA's YouTube channel at [YouTube.com/nationalcomm](https://www.youtube.com/nationalcomm).

Also, in NCA news, NCA members can register for the NCA annual convention at a reduced rate until October 1. The NCA 107th annual convention will take place as a face-to-face meeting in Seattle, Washington, November 18 through 21. NCA is committed to following federal, state, city, and facility guidance regarding the health and safety of attendees. Learn more about NCA's commitments related to the COVID-19 pandemic and register today at [natcom.org/register](https://natcom.org/register).

And speaking of the convention, we'll be talking about it in depth during our next episode. NCA's second Vice President and Primary Program Planner Roseann M. Mandziuk will join the podcast to discuss plans for the 2021 annual convention including special sessions focusing on renewal and transformation, the Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture, and more. We hope you'll join us for this exciting episode of *Communication Matters* on September 23rd.

**Conclusion:**

Be sure to engage with us on social media by liking us on Facebook, following NCA on Twitter and Instagram and watching us on YouTube. And before you go, hit subscribe wherever you get your podcasts to listen in as we discuss emerging scholarship, establish theory and new applications, all exploring just how much communication matters in our classrooms, in our communities and in our world.

The National Communication Association is the preeminent scholarly association devoted to the study and teaching of communication. Founded in 1914, NCA is a thriving group of thousands from across the nation and around the world who are committed to a collective mission to advance communication as an academic discipline. In keeping with NCA's mission to advance the discipline of communication, NCA has developed this podcast series to expand the reach of our



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member scholars' work and perspectives. *Communication Matters*, organized at the national office in downtown Washington DC, is produced by Assistant Director of External Affairs and Publications Chelsea Bowes with writing support from Director of External Affairs and Publications Wendy Fernando and Content Development Specialist Grace Hébert. Thank you for listening.

RECORDING ENDS