

## **GRADUATE EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION (GEO) NOMINEES FOR FALL 2020**

**Nominees are listed here in alphabetical order by first name. Headshots, emails, programs, short bios, and platform statements have been included.**

***Voting will occur on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of October on digital format. In order to receive your online ballot, you need to register on or before October 7<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. EST. To see more details on how to register [click here](#), or contact us to [geoumb.elections@gmail.com](mailto:geoumb.elections@gmail.com)***

**NAME:** Anthony "Tony" Curtis Martin  
**EMAIL:** Anthony.martin002@umb.edu  
**PROGRAM:** Critical Ethnic and Community Studies, MS



**BIO:** As a graduate student with more than 25 years of professional experience, I have served in three military branches, I have worked on Capitol Hill. I have served as a political appointee for two mayoral administrations, and currently a student activist and community leader. I will represent your interests and fight for important things to you as a GEO Board member. One of my initiatives currently includes bringing a chapter of My Brother's keeper to UMass Boston, collaborating with the Mayor's office and Boston public schools. As an undergraduate, I have enjoyed bringing Dr. King's sister-in-law to campus on two occasions. Spring of 2015 and again spring of 2018. I have enjoyed being awarded the Benjamin Gilman Scholarship by the State Department, where I studied and lived in Trinidad and Tobago for a semester, and I have traveled to China as a study abroad student

ambassador of goodwill.

**PLATFORM:** I have had the honor of collaborating with the SAMHSA grant focused on creating a Black Center of Excellence (COE) to address disparities caused by racism in mental health in the Black community. What we hope to accomplish as a centerpiece for our My Brother's Keeper chapter at UMASS Boston is training. Certification in therapeutic mentoring will help ensure that youth get the support they need and that mentors are provided with professional recognition for their service. This collaboration will provide the training, scaffolding, and supervision that students need to serve as influential mentors to students in neighboring Boston Public Schools (BPS) and to recruit and cultivate mentors from across Boston's professional communities. To provide training and certification in therapeutic mentoring and ensure that youth get the support they need and that mentors are provided with professional recognition for their service.

I am a member of the Academic Continuity Task Force's Restorative Justice Initiative (RJI) subcommittee, working with the Undoing Racism and Labor Management Groups; and the Vice Chancellors of Student Affairs, Athletic Affairs, and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. To promote an equitable and just environment for all in the UMass Boston community, the City of Boston, and the Commonwealth.

Previous events I have facilitated include "Conversations with Millennial Men of Color," at UMASS Boston co-sponsored by the Trotter and Gastón institutes, the Black Student Center, Rising Tide Boston, and Success Boston, the Joiner Institute. Co-organized by the Joiner Institute, the Yale Program for Recovery and Community Health, New England Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (NE MHTTC), Trotter and Gastón institutes, Rising Tide Boston, the Black Student Center, and Success Boston.

My work speaks for itself; please give me your vote. I will fight for what matters most to you as a graduate student, today and tomorrow.

**NAME:** Brittany Riffle  
**EMAIL:** Brittany.riffle001@umb.edu  
**PROGRAM:** Sociology, PhD



**BIO:** Brittany (she/her/hers) is a third year PhD student in sociology. Her research focuses on hierarchies and inequities in the workplace — specifically that of the hospitality industry. She got her BA in sociology from Brooklyn College in Brooklyn, NY in 2017 and her MA in Applied Sociology at UMass Boston in 2020. She currently volunteers as a GEO Program Representative for the Sociology Department and is ready to have more responsibility and help get things done!

**PLATFORM:** UMass Boston is home to some of the most inspirational, diverse and hardworking students in Boston. Most of us are not only students but workers, parents, caretakers, and community leaders. I want to be on the GEO organizing committee because I am passionate about graduate student workers getting the most out of their research and teaching assistantships and teaching fellowships. In solidarity with UMass Boston graduate employees, I look forward to putting pressure on UMass Boston to decrease parking and transportation costs;

increase graduate student employee wages; provide safe and extensive childcare services to student parents; acknowledge Teaching Fellowships as a full-time assistantship; have all-inclusive tuition waivers that eliminate extra fees; and force UMass Boston to acknowledge the needs of graduate student employees by making sure they are part of decision making processes in matters that relate to them.

Due to COVID-19, we are experiencing unprecedented hurdles in all aspects of our student lives. As an elected GEO organizing committee member, I will work with each of you to address these challenges as we continue remote learning.

I believe education is a human right and we have the right to demand the best conditions that will help us succeed in becoming and shaping future leaders. Better conditions for graduate student workers mean better outcomes for the undergraduate community who rely largely on us to educate them.

**NAME:** Chidimma Ozor, MSW, MA

**EMAIL:** Chidimma.ozor@umb.edu

**PROGRAM:** Global Inclusion and Social Development, PhD



**BIO:** Chidimma Ozor, MSW, MA, is a first year PhD student in the School of Global Inclusion and Social Development. She earned her MSW in July 2020. Her social justice podcast, conscious + aligned with Chidimma, seeks to illuminate diverse and marginalized BIPOC voices. During her time as an MSW candidate at the University of Michigan, she co-founded the School's In Session Educational Series. In her free time her consulting firm, Chidimma Ozor Consulting, educates and facilitates anti-racism, anti-oppression, diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings for various entities. She will also be opening up her private clinical practice providing therapy for Black women, Black folks, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. She enjoys spending time with loved ones, riding her Peloton, eating salads and French fries, traveling, the sun, and thinking of poignant and thought-provoking statements for the statement tee company, black radical scholars, that she co-founded with a colleague at the School of Social Work.

**PLATFORM:** I would like to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee because I was able to witness firsthand how unions work and that they have the ability to further a more

inclusive agenda as I watched what has been occurring in Ann Arbor, MI at the University of Michigan, with the recent #ScholarStrike that originally was to be a two-day strike on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 and Wednesday, September 9, 2020. That two-day strike continued for nine days. U-M President Schlissel filed an injunction with the court to end the strike and effectively order graduate student instructors (GSI) to return to the classroom and unsafe working conditions in order to teach undergraduate students; he attempted to compel them to return to classrooms in which they did not feel safe. Following along each day, even from the sidelines, was invigorating and has inspired me to be involved in GEO broadly and specifically with the GEO Organizing Committee. I have a deep desire to come alongside people intentionally, strategically, and thoughtfully so that my work is in service of others in a meaningful, helpful, and appropriate way. Having enjoyed the benefits of the U-M GEO when I was a GSI during my MSW program, I am especially passionate about UMass Boston paying 100% for healthcare, dental, and vision; increasing the stipends research assistants (RAs) and teaching assistants (TAs) earn; and ensuring that tuition waivers are still provided. Another advantage that I have is that I am a new community member to UMass Boston and while I do enjoy privileges, I also hold some marginalized social identities which leads me to experience oppression as well. Having lived experiences with both adds value to the educational journey I've been on and allows me to show up authentically, vulnerably, and transparently

**NAME:** Liz Simpson  
**EMAIL:** Elizabeth.simpson001@umb.edu  
**PROGRAM:** Gerontology, PhD



**BIO:** I am a 4<sup>th</sup> year student in the Gerontology doctoral program in the McCormack School, with an interest in health policy and health equity. I have a background in public health, outreach, and advocacy and will bring this experience and skillset to my union service.

**PLATFORM:** Graduate students offer universities supremely committed and qualified employees at a fraction of the cost of what the high-quality work we produce is truly worth. As long as the relationship remains mutually beneficial, the graduate assistant experience can also be a growth experience for graduate students; however, the status quo relationship is not always sufficient and is vulnerable to erosion in the absence of the oversight that our union membership offers. I believe it is the mission of this union's leadership to not only fight against the gradual (or sometimes abrupt) erosions of our benefits and protections, but also to advocate for a more sufficient status quo that recognize the realities of pursuing a graduate education in the Boston area and meeting our various

responsibilities with our physical and mental – and financial – health intact. We are worth it.

As an active member of GEO since beginning my studies at UMB in 2017, I have been impressed with the dedication of union leadership to pursuing these broader goals of securing our benefits and protections and also to advocating for individual students during times of conflict with departments or faculty. They really do show up and have earned my trust. I believe I can be an asset to the organizing committee, particularly during the bargaining period. I am currently a member of the Bargaining Support Committee and feel that my role there will transition relatively seamlessly into that of a union representative. To present the case for graduate student support to the university, we will need to put in a lot of prep work to be ready to respond to push back to our advocacy efforts. I am, in short, a workhorse. Should you choose to elect me, I look forward to putting that energy towards the bargaining campaign and towards advocating for the benefits and protections that we the members have identified as essential to our current and future livelihoods.

Thank you and I hope that I have earned your vote in October!