**STARLA SIMMONS, LCSW-S**

Clinical Assistant Professor

starla.simmons@utexas.edu

**EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

*Master of Science in Social Work, The* University of Texas at Austin, 2007

*Bachelor of Social Welfare, University of Kansas, 2005*

**TEACHING & PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS**

Social work practice and field education, social justice and advocacy, environmental justice, collective trauma & holistic healing practices, ecotherapy, social work practice in schools, perinatal health, community-based participatory research

**PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE, CERTIFICATIONS, AND MEMBERSHIPS**

Texas State Board of Social Work Examiner’s Approved Clinical Supervisor, 2022-current

Licensed Clinical Social Worker, 2018-current

Licensed Master of Social Work, 2008-current

National Association of Social Workers, 2021-current

**ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS AND EXPERIENCE**

**The University of Texas at Austin, Steve Hicks School of Social Work:**

* *Clinical Assistant Professor*, 2018- current
* *Program Director*, Earl Maxwell Scholars Program, 2022-current
* *Principal Investigator*, 2021 St. David’s Foundation Grant, $267,000 “*Black Mamas ATX”* and 2021 *Impact Austin Grant*, $40,000, “*Black Mamas REACH*”, 2021-2022
* *Management Board* member of the University of Texas Elementary School, 2020-current
* Council on Social Work Education, National Taskforce member, Curricular Guide for Environmental Justice 2019-2020
* Steve Hicks School Executive Committee, 2020-2022
* Steve Hicks School Field Education Committee, 2018-current
* Steve Hicks School Master’s Program Committee, 2018-current
* Steve Hicks School Community Partner Development Committee, 2018-current
* Faculty Advisor, Black Scholar’s Network, 2020-current
* Faculty Advisor, Environmental Justice and Ecotherapy Student Group, 2018-current
* Faculty Advisor, P.O.C.K.E.T student group, 2018-2021
* Faculty Liaison to student cohorts enrolled in Field Education
* Field Placement Advisor to graduate students

**COURSES TAUGHT**

Summer 2023: Foundations of Social Justice

Summer 2022: Assessment and Treatment of Traumatized Populations

Spring 2022: Social Work Practice II, Field Education II

Fall 2021: Social Work Practice I, Field Education I

Spring 2021: Social Work Practice II, Field Education II

Fall 2020: Social Work Practice I, Field Education I

Summer 2020: Social Work, Practice II, Assessment and Treatment of Traumatized Populations

Spring 2020: Social Work Practice II, Field Education II, Advanced Field Instruction III, IV

Fall 2019: Social Work Practice I, Field Education I

Summer 2019: Social Work Practice II, Assessment and Treatment of Traumatized Populations

Spring 2019: Social Work Practice II, Field Education II, Advanced Field Instruction III, IV

Fall 2018: Social Work Practice I, Field Education I

**RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**Black Mamas ATX,** *Interim Executive Director, January 2020-2021*

* Provided leadership, planning, grant writing and supervision of the organizations grants & fiscal contracts
* Hired & supervised program staff
* Liaised to the Board of Directors & research, and community partners
* Engaged with community through communication, presentations & media
* Facilitated organizational transition from research project into existing non-profit

**Austin Independent School District,** *Behavioral Health Specialist,* Feb 2015-August 2018

* Coordinate, liaison, and support implementation and sustainability of 1115 Waiver DSRIP Behavioral Health and VOCA Grant programming across the district

**Austin Independent School District,** *Social Services Specialist, February 2012-Jan 2015*

* Provide consultation to teachers and administration to create interventions for students’ behavioral, academic and social service needs for 12 campuses

**Communities in Schools of Central Texas,** *Program Manager,* Aug 2007-Feb 2012

* Create and implement comprehensive school-based services for pre-K through 5th​ grade students in the areas

**Communities in Schools of Central Texas***,* Smart Kids Caseworker, June 2007-Aug 2007

* Facilitate summer programming, including planning enrichment field trips and activities to increase social skills

**UT-Austin School of Social Work,** *MSSW Graduate & Teaching Assistant*, Jan 2006-Dec 2006

* Office of Student & Community Affairs, Advanced Social Work Practice

**Wyandot Center for Behavioral Health**, *Case Manager*, September 2004-July 2005

* Develop and implement treatment plans and wrap-around services for youth at risk for hospitalization and/or removal from home

**NATIONAL SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS**

Simmons, S., Calbow, E. (June 2020). Showing up For Racial Justice, co-presenter for virtual webinar, Steve Hicks School of Social Work, DiNitto Center for Career Services

Simmons, S.(April 2017). First Year Lessons Learned: Outdoor Afro​, Professional Workshop for National Outdoor Afro Leadership Summit, April 2017

**STATEWIDE SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS:**

Simmons, S. (May 2023). Mindfulness in Nature. Webinar for Texas Children in Nature Network

Simmons, S. (December 2022). Healing With Nature: Social Justice Framework. Texas Children in Nature Summit, The University of Texas at Austin

Simmons, S. (November 2022). Healing Centered Engagement, virtual presentation for Texas Resilient Church Collective Steering Committee

Simmons, S. (April 2022) Healing with Nature: Ecotherapy & Mindfulness, recorded webinar for Texas Historical Society

Simmons, S. (Feb 2022), Healing with Nature: A Social Justice Framework, presenter, Texas School Social Work Conference

Simmons, S. (February 2021). Building Collective Resilience: An Ethical Response to Trying Times, virtual presentation, Texas School Social Worker’s Conference, Steve Hicks School of Social Work

Simmons, S. (September 2020). Collective Resilience: Practices for Health & Mental Well-Being, virtual presentation, In Common, Episcopal Health Foundation

Simmons, S. (October 2019). A Prescription for Nature: Perspectives on Nature and Wellbeing, panelist for Healthier Texas Summit

Simmons, S. (February 2018). Cultural Considerations in Ecotherapy,​ Texas School Social Work Conference, February 2018

Simmons, S., Rosario, M. (February 2012). Let’s Talk About Race: Using a Racial Equity Lens in School Social Work​, Texas School Social Work Conference

**LOCAL SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS**

Simmons, S., Losch. L, Conner, N., Sera. J (June 2023). Culturally Congruent Perinatal Mental Health Panel, Birthing Black Community Summit 2023, Black Mamas ATX, Huston-Tillotson University

Simmons, S., Norton, C. Briscoe, A. Huston (June 2023). Nature as our Teacher. Explore Austin Great Outdoors Month, Huston-Tillotson University

Simmons, S. (March 2023). Healing With Nature: Ecotherapy. Community Partners for Children, Travis County

Simmons, S. (November 2022). Healing With Nature: Ecotherapy. Virtual training for Austin Child Guidance Center

Simmons, S. (April 2022) Environmental Justice & Ecotherapy Conference, “Healing Ourselves and Communities through Environmental Justice”, Conference host, organizer and panelist

Simmons, S. (Dec 2021) Holistically Healing Black Maternal Health Summit, Conference Host & Coordinator, Black Mamas ATX

Simmons, S. (Sep 2021) Women Leaders: Webinar panelist for Impact Austin

Simmons, S. (September 2021). Healing with Nature: Ecotherapy & Social Work Practice, virtual presentation Social Services Case Management Network

Simmons, S. (August 2021). Healing with Nature: Ecotherapy and Mindfulness, virtual presentation, Travis Audubon Society

Simmons, S. (Nov/February 2021). Sowing Seeds & Making Meaning: Read Against Racism, virtual presentation, Maplewood Elementary, Austin ISD

Simmons, S. (November 2020). Engaging in Racial Justice: Foundations for Clinical Practice, workshop facilitation for Intervention Services

Simmons, S. Coleman, K. (September 2020). Parks for All: Promoting Equity in Austin’s Parks”, virtual panel Austin Parks Foundation

Simmons, S. (July 2020). Using Mindfulness to Engage in conversations about Race, virtual presentation for AGE of Central Texas

Simmons, S. (June 2020). How to talk to Kids about Race: The Elementary Years, virtual panelist for Austin Child Guidance Center

Simmons, S. (February 2020). Healing with Nature: Ecotherapy for Black Wellbeing, presenter for Central Texas African American Support Conference

Simmons, S. (December 2019). Environmental Justice and Social Work: CADET Training, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Simmons, S. (March 2019). Exploring through a Cultural Lens, presenter for Explore Austin Mentor Summit

Simmons, S. (January 2019) Ecotherapy through a Cultural Lens, presenter Texas Ecotherapy Collective,

Simmons, S. (December 2018). Using Mindfulness when talking about Race, Austin ISD Seedling Foundation School Coordinators

Simmons, S. (February 2018). Building Cultural Competence​, Professional Development workshop for Seedling Foundation

Simmons, S. (February 2018). Dealing with Discomfort: Using Mindfulness to Talk About Race​, Guest Lecture for Social Work Practice class, University of Texas at Austin

Jackson, A., Elliot, M., Simmons, S. (2017). Liberating Structures: Reinventing the How​, co facilitator for Alpinista Consulting

Simmons, S. (June 2017). Mindfulness Walk for Self-Care,​ Professional Development Facilitator for Sierra Club Leadership Retreat

Simmons, S. (June 2017). Mindfulness Practices. Bertha Sadler Means Young Women’s Leadership Academy, Austin ISD.

Simmons, S. (May 2017) Community Forum: Breaking the Silence. ​Panel Moderator for Austin ISD & Integral Care

Simmons, S. (November 2016). Mentoring Children of Color,​ presentation for Seedling Foundation

Simmons, S. (2012-2015). Self-Care For Teachers,​ yearly Professional Development for Austin ISD,

**UNIVERSITY SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS**

Llanes, C. Simmons, S (April 2023). Environmental Justice and Social Work Practice. Community Conversations, Steve Hicks School of Social Work.

Simmons, S. (January 2023). Elevating Environmental Justice in Social Work Practice, Field Instructor Development Institute, Steve Hicks School of Social Work

Simmons, S. Calbow. E. (November 2022). Teaching Anti-Oppressive Practices in Field Education. Virtual Field Instructor presentation, Steve Hicks School of Social Work

Bell, J., Wingez-Yanes, N. Simmons, S. (September 2021). Disability Justice & Social Work Practice, virtual panelist, Field Instructor Development Institute, Steve Hicks School of Social Work

Gaitan, R., Simmons, S. (September 2021). Do You See Me? Making our System Work for the Marginalized, virtual co-presentation, Field Instructor Development Institute, Steve Hicks School of Social Work

Simmons, S. (May 2021). Film Discussion, American Ascent, Controversy and Conversation, UT Humanities Institute

Simmons, S. (April 2021). Expanding Mental Health Supports to Black Mothers, Perinatal Mental Health Conference, Steve Hicks School of Social Work

Simmons, S. (November 2020). Healing with Nature: Social Justice Framework, Environmental Justice and Ecotherapy Student Group, Steve Hicks School

Simmons, S. (November 2019). Healing with Nature: A Social Justice Framework, presentation for UT Steve Hicks School of Social Work, Environmental Justice and Ecotherapy Student Group

Simmons, S. (March 2017). Mindfulness Walk for Self-Care. ​Professional Development Facilitator for All-Advisor Retreat, College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Austin

Simmons, S. (September 2016). Structural Racism and Social Work,​ Guest Lecture for social work courses at University of Texas at Austin

Simmons, S. (fall 2012/spring 2013). Structural Racism and Race Equity​, Guest Lecture for Foundations of Social Justice Class, University of Texas at Austin

**VOLUNTEER APPOINTED POSITIONS**

*Board Chair*​, *Mama Sana Vibrant Woman,* ​2017-2019

*Leadership Team*​, *Outdoor Afro* ​2016-2018

*Field Instructor*​, The *University of Texas at Austin School Social Work*​​, 2007-2012

**HONORS & AWARDS**

2023 Recipient, *Social Worker of the Year*, National Association of Social Workers, Capital Area Branch

2019 Recipient, *John Covert Watson Award for Vision*, Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center, Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin

2019, Recipient, *Clock Award*, Services for Students with Disabilities, The University of Texas at Austin

Recipient, *Volunteer of the Year*, Austin ISD

2006 Recipient, *Ellen Carey Scholarship* Award for Child Welfare

**COMMUNITY SERVICE AND COMMITTEE WORK**

*Chair, School*-Based Work Group for Travis County Children’s Mental Health Plan 2016-2017

*Chair,*​ Austin ISD Mental Health Alliance, 2015-2016

*Chair*​, Communities in Schools of Central Texas Cultural Competency Committee, 2008-2012

*Member,* ​Early Childhood Results Count*, 2017-2018*

*Member,*​ Liberating Structures User Group*, 2017* ​

*Member,* ​Travis County Children’s Mental Health Plan*,*​​ 2017

*Member,* ​Trauma Informed Care Consortium, 2015-2017

*Member,* ​Austin ISD School Health Advisory Committee*,* ​ ​2015

*Member*​, Kids Living Well (formerly Children and Youth Mental Health Planning Partnership) 2015

*Member*​, Austin Area African American Behavioral Health Network, 2014-present

M*ember*​​, Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, 2015-2016

*Member*​, UT Social Work Action Alliance, 2006-2007

*Participant,* ​Race Equity Leadership Conference, African American Policy Institute, 2010

*Student*​, Spanish for Social Workers, Universidad de Costa Rica, 2004

**MEDIA**

Pease Park Conservancy, Women’s History Month Feature, March 2021

<https://peasepark.org/news/2021/3/29/womens-history-month-starla-simmons>

“Austin Parks Foundation Discusses Racial Equity in Green Spaces” by Lin Fisher, September 2020

<https://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2020-09-18/austin-parks-foundation-discusses-racial-equity-in-green-spaces/>

“Maternal Health Care Advocates Applaud New Law to Extend Medicaid Coverage, but Say More Is Needed” by Allyson Waller, The Texas Tribune, 8-28-2021

<https://www.keranews.org/health-wellness/2021-08-28/maternal-health-care-advocates-applaud-new-law-to-extend-medicaid-coverage-but-say-more-is-needed>