

Green's new book, published by Bloomsbury Academic, has received glowing reviews from Booklist, Pulitzer Prize winner Jericho Brown, Publishers Weekly, Ms. Magazine, and more. Her research and writing were supported in part by a four-year term as UNCG's Linda Arnold Carlisle Distinguished Excellence Professor.

A RESPECTABLE LIFE

"I am of the latter class ... White enough to pass for white, but with a darker family background, a real love for the mother race, and no desire to be numbered among the white race."

These sentences from Alice Dunbar-Nelson's essay "Brass Ankles Speaks" are also the opening lines of a groundbreaking new book by Dr. Tara T. Green that examines the life of Dunbar-Nelson.

"Love, Activism, and the Respectable Life of Alice Dunbar-Nelson" is an in-depth look at a woman known as a poet, short-story writer, essayist, and activist – and perhaps even better known for her short marriage to Paul Laurence Dunbar, one of America's first influential Black poets.

Dunbar-Nelson was part of the Harlem Renaissance and movements against lynching and for racial equity and a woman's right to vote. And she did all of this, Green says, while attempting to toe the line of respectability demanded by the growing Black middle-class society of 19th-century America.

"Her gender, race, and sexuality never fit neatly into societal roles," says Green. "She was a woman who tested the boundaries in a variety of ways."

Green discovered the writer as an undergraduate – both she and her subject of interest attended the same college and grew up in the New Orleans area. But reading Dunbar-Nelson's works as a student offered Green a new view: "She transported me to another place, another time, that I didn't know. She challenged my imagination."

Fast forward to 2010, and Green, a professor in UNCG's programs for African American and African Diaspora Studies and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies,

began examining Dunbar-Nelson's papers and diaries housed at the University of Delaware.

"I was sent. All this material, and nobody had written her biography. How was this possible? I felt an obligation to right a wrong. Knowing her background and my background, if I wasn't going to write this, then who would?"

The result – which also reflects materials Green found in early newspaper databases, Howard University's library, the Library of Congress, the Atlanta Center, and the Amistad Research Center – affords readers a look at a very different private life behind the public facade.

With a likely-White father she didn't know, Alice Ruth Moore did not fit easily into prescribed roles in Black or White society.

In a world where divorce was rare, same-sex relationships were illegal, and motherhood was expected, the author married three times, conducted relationships with women, had no children of her own, and worked as a teacher and administrator. During her famed marriage to Paul Laurence Dunbar, she was physically abused.

"Like so many of us today, she lived with secrets," Green says. "She was a Black woman who persevered, and she earned a certain measure of acceptability." At the same time, in many ways she lived her life on her own terms.

"I hope that others will find her life an inspiration. She survived lots of trauma, but she also had moments of happiness. She was a Black woman doing what Black women do – surviving and wanting to be accepted."

by Robin Adams Cheeley
learn more at drtaratgreen.com

INTIMATE IMPACT

Dr. Jennifer Toller Erasquin and fellow researchers were putting the final touches on a public health survey they would pilot for the World Health Organization when a stunning event took precedence: the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

She was on her way home from Kenya – from an international meeting related to that project – when the world changed in what seemed like an instant.

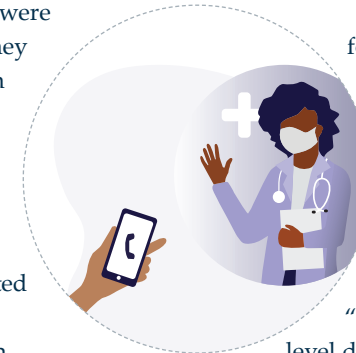
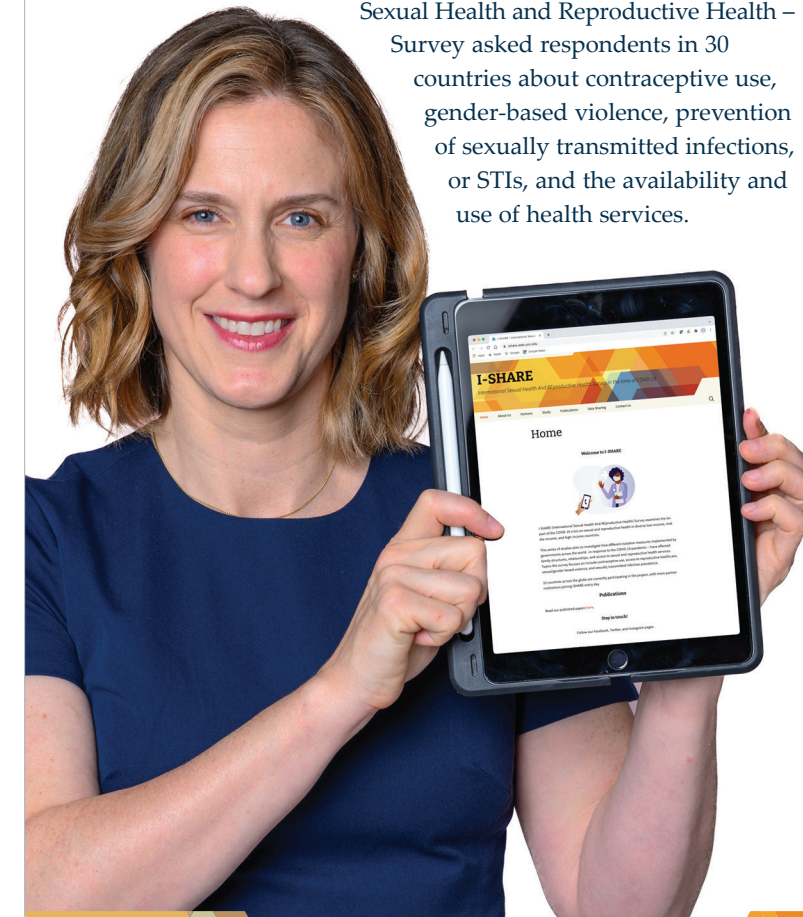
"Three days before my return, major U.S. airports started screening passengers for symptoms," she recalls.

The associate professor in public health education couldn't imagine then just how broadly the pandemic would affect all our lives, including her main area of research: sexual and reproductive health.

Her team was able to pivot, translating their multi-country survey into an online format and adding questions related to COVID-19 – particularly how the pandemic affected people's sexual relationships and access to related health services.

"My expertise is 'how do you get people to talk about a very intimate part of their lives,'" she says.

The resulting I-SHARE – International Sexual Health and Reproductive Health – Survey asked respondents in 30 countries about contraceptive use, gender-based violence, prevention of sexually transmitted infections, or STIs, and the availability and use of health services.



One-third of respondents who needed testing for STIs or HIV reported limited or no access to testing during pandemic-related lockdowns. Also, about 6% of people with casual sexual partners reported decreased condom use.

These outcomes and others were recently published in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, and Erasquin says there's more to come as researchers continue to analyze results.

"I'm currently examining the impacts of country-level differences in wealth, gender equality, and COVID-19 mitigation measures."

"Dr. Erasquin has been a remarkable leader within the I-SHARE consortium," says Dr. Joe Tucker, principal investigator for the project and an associate professor at both UNC School of Medicine and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. "She has helped mentor trainees, lead analyses, and write scientific manuscripts that represented a terrific output from this rich collaboration."

Erasquin especially enjoyed the work, she says, because accommodations due to the pandemic unexpectedly increased inclusivity in research, "sort of leveling the playing field." For example, more scientists, including junior-level researchers, could join international collaborations when meetings went virtual.

The survey results underscore the importance of offering sexual health care services, even during a global crisis.

"In some ways, we were caught off guard by COVID-19," Erasquin says. "Public health responses focused primarily on protection from respiratory disease, and plans to address potential ripple effects weren't necessarily well-articulated in most locations. The sudden reduction in access to health care dramatically affected people's lives."

The crisis did birth some positive innovations, she says, such as an increase in telemedicine visits related to reproductive health and a rise in at-home self-testing for STIs.

"Ultimately, it's about countries and localities calibrating responses to balance multiple public health goals," Erasquin says. "When overly stringent lockdown measures also restrict people's access to condoms, ability to see a health care provider, or STI testing, we're doing a different kind of harm. It's a very difficult balancing process, but we need to figure it out. This will not be the only pandemic that our world sees."

by Dawn Martin • learn more at go.uncg.edu/erasquin