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**IN LOVING MEMORY**

*DR. JOSEPH A. RUKUS, JR*



*JULY 27, 1966*

*DECEMBER 28, 2020*



*A Note from the Editor...*

**M**aya Angelou said, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” These words are a daily reminder that no matter how many people come into your life, only true friends will leave footprints on our heart. Our hearts are heavy, as we begin our Spring 21 semester with the loss of our dear friend and colleague, Dr. Joseph Rukus. His passing has left the CSG Department and the A-State community with an ache that only time can heal. Still, in our mourning, we must never forget the spirit of his contagious laughter, his passion for justice & equality, and the dedication he held in seeing his students and the CSG department succeed. It is with great respect that the Spring 2021 CSG Newsletter be dedicated to the memory of Dr. Joseph Rukus.



As we reflect on our fondest memories of Joe, we also welcome the Spring 2021 semester with a sense of rejuvenation; a new year and a new start. One year ago, our campus, our communities, and our lives were uprooted by Covid-19. The absence of faculty and the small number of students on campus were genuinely difficult to witness. To make the year more challenging, we faced a tornado, work-from-home quarantines, and retail shortages of all types. These circumstances were often significant and continue to push us to our limits. Still, we focus on embracing these changes. We continue to defend and support our department, ourselves, and our campus family through grace, compassion, understanding, and perhaps a little grit. Kipling said it best: “The strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.”

Wolves Up!



DEAN B. ELLIS LIBRARY LIT RED IN MEMORY OF DR. RUKUS

**Newsletter Staff**

**Mrs. LaVonda Evans**  
*Editor*

**Inside this issue**

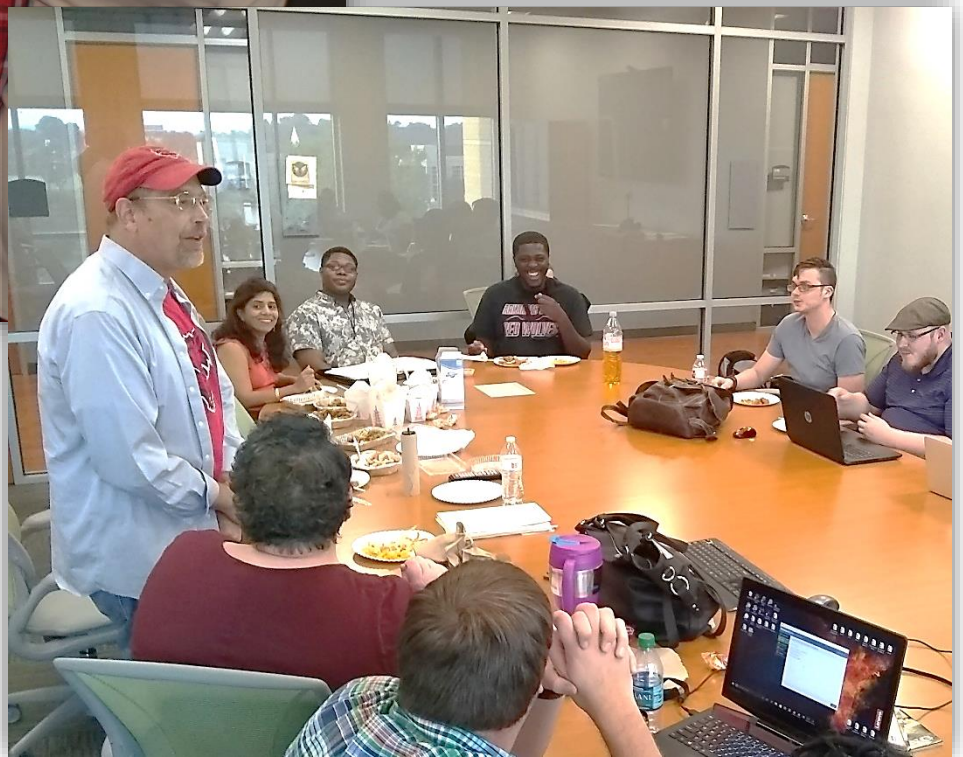
- Letter from the Editor.....2
- Memorials.....3
- New Faculty & Staff.....6
- CSG Advisory Board .....6



# MEMORIES



HIS SMILE AND BOISTEROUS LAUGHTER FILLED THE HALLS



GRAD TOWN HALL MEETINGS WERE ONE OF MANY WAYS DR. RUKUS WORKED TOWARD BRINGING STUDENTS AND FACULTY TOGETHER

# MEMORIES



CSG PICNIC



DR. RUKUS ALWAYS CELEBRATED HIS STUDENTS AND THE DEPARTMENTS ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS



When I was first admitted to the graduate program, I was working with FEMA in Lewisville, Texas. My phone rang and I stepped out to take the call. It was Dr. Rukus calling me to let me know that I had been accepted into the program. I remember him telling me to make sure not to call whenever Florida State was playing football and to especially not call if they were losing. At that time, I never imagined that I would work as closely with him as I did.

I served as his graduate assistant for a year and a half, helping with his course work as well as transporting to some off-site locations

for classes. In every interaction we had, I could see how passionate he was both for teaching his students but also for reaching out to the community. He was the first professor I had

ever had that would require community service related to the criminal justice system. Even though some students may not have understood the reasoning behind a more proactive project, it served a purpose. What he was trying to convey to his students was humanity. That although someone ended up in the criminal justice system, they were not inherently written off as an outcast and to be treated as dirt. This helped shape his students for when they do start working out in the criminal justice field. You could see the students that thrived under his teaching, even if it were in non-conventional teaching methods that we had grown used to prior to the pandemic.

His teachings will carry on both in the classrooms here at

Arkansas State University, but also out in the real world as his students go and make a difference in our field.

~Kate Chapman,  
MA Criminal Justice Major

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The first class I had with Dr. Rukus was Juvenile Delinquency. It seems forever ago. He taught every class with a smile on his face and laughed during every class. He could not contain his passion for teaching or his subject. I was not doing the best in school, because of personal issues that were happening at that time. He met with me to discuss my grade. After telling him everything, he offered anything he

could to help me with my grade and to just help

me. He was kind and it meant a lot to me. When I finally graduated,

I decided to get a master's degree. My grades did not meet the requirement, but instead of telling me no, he gave me a choice. I

could not pursue higher education, or I could retake two lower-level courses to get a better grade. He gave me a chance to prove myself. I succeeded and am about to graduate with my Master's in Criminal Justice. I cannot thank him enough for the chance he gave me. It truly changed my life.

~Kyler Brinkley,  
MA Criminal Justice Major

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I had the great pleasure to have been taught by Professor Rukus.. Professor Rukus was like no other person I had met before. His personality and love for his career was admirable and unmatched. He brought so much light into the classroom and everyone could see that he truly loved teaching by the amount of personal stories he added

into his lectures. Even during his treatments, he showed nothing but bravery and never lost his passion. When attending his classes, he made his students feel as if we weren't even being lectured because he made everyone feel comfortable and valued. He strived for his classes to have open discussions and use critical thinking for open ended questions. Professor Rukus was bold, witty, and brilliant. This was displayed throughout his lectures and assignments he had given us. He wanted us to experience the real criminal justice institutions, either by volunteering or through the tours we would attend with him. I will cherish all of the memories I have in class with him, forever and his classes were some I will never forget.

~Amanda Balentine, BA  
Sociology/BA Criminology Major

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What a life! As I remember Dr. Joseph Rukus, I can't help but simply smile. He always possessed such a joyous presence, a caring nature, and led by the greatest of examples. I will never forget the sound of his infectious laughter as it carried down the hall from his office to the graduate assistant's office, the complete and utter annoyance of his forceful typing on a keyboard and most importantly, the way he taught me to always respect myself by completing everything I ever set out to accomplish – no matter how difficult the journey may be or become. *What a life!* Thank you, Joe... for being a professor who pushed me to do my greatest work, an advisor who wouldn't let me take the easy way out, and a mentor who truly cared. You will be greatly missed.

-Trey S. Sykes, Alumni, MA Criminal Justice ■

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# *Welcome to A-STATE!*

## **Dr. Sanjeev Acharya**

### **Temporary Assistant Professor of Sociology**

Sanjeev Acharya received his Ph.D. in Medical Sociology from University of Alabama at Birmingham. His research interests lie in health disparities, global health, socioeconomic status and health, gender and health, and quantitative methods. His research collaborations appear in *The Lancet – EclinicalMedicine*, *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Disparities*, *Reproductive Health*, and *The Journal of Psychology*. He is a member of American Sociological Association, Population Association of America, and Mid-South Sociological Association. He also serves as a peer-reviewer in the *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*.

Aside from his teaching role, Sanjeev likes to meditate, explore the wonders of nature, learn the mysteries of our universe, and play guitar.



## CSG Academic Advisory Board

Karlie Frazier

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Andrew Spillman

Amanda Balentine

Kyler Brinkley

