



# **Immigration is American Collaboration Network**

**2023**



## Ousman Ba

**Education Coordinator**

**African Leadership Group (Colorado)**

Ousman Ba is originally from Senegal and was raised in Denver, Colorado. A first-generation college graduate at Colorado State University with a degree in political science and international studies. Upon graduation, Ousman committed to a year of service with Americorps City Year, where he worked at Miami Central High School preparing students with the social, emotional, and academic skills and mindsets to succeed in school and in life. After City Year, he moved back to Denver and worked in the banking industry as a treasury management representative with FirstBank. During his time at FirstBank, he volunteered with African Leadership Group(ALG) as the Youth Empowerment Program facilitator. After two years as a volunteer, he joined the ALG team as a Program Coordinator. Past graduate of the Leadership Africa Program with African Leadership Group and currently is part of Leadership Aurora class of 2023. He sits on the Board of Ednium Collective. Ousman is passionate about serving the community, loves sports, reading, traveling and enjoys time with family and friends.



## Efetobore Diepreye Isiaku

**Parent Committee - Member**

**African Leadership Group (Colorado)**

Efetobore Diepreye Isiaku was born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria. She has been living in the U.S., specifically Denver, for the past four years. She is happily married with a bubbly and easy-going daughter. Efe is a specialized Mechanical Engineering Technologist with a degree from Tver State Technical University, Russia and is also a MSc degree holder in Project Management in Built Environment from Anglia Ruskin, University United Kingdom. Efe is currently working with one of the best luxurious hospitality companies, Inspirato, as their Scrum Master. Alongside that, she is running her One Stop Shop enterprise, Gifted Hand LLC, providing event hairdressing and makeup services for her clients. She coordinates and leads the Choir of Christ Peace Heritage Ministries in Aurora, Efe is also an active member of the African Leadership Group, She graduated of the ALG public speaking class and is currently in the Leadership Africa Program. Efe is looking forward to working with orphanages in the near future because she believes everyone deserves to be loved.



## **Cristina Garza**

**Executive Director**

**Avance - Austin (Texas)**

Prior to being the Executive Director at AVANCE-Austin, Cristina served as Director of Social Impact for the Mission Economic Development Corporation (EDC) where she curated and lead all STEAM and entrepreneurship initiatives for this EDC, and through this work committed herself to improving the financial mobility of area residents, and fostering progressive and equitable economic development practices. She was named Code.Org's 2019 Champion of Computer Science. She is also a 2017 Next City Vanguard and named by CityLab Latino one of the Top 20 Young Civic Leaders of 2017. Before her career in economic development, Cristina worked in education at museums in New York City including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rubin of Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Historical Society, and the Brooklyn Museum. She holds a BA from New York University, an MA from Syracuse University where she received the Florence Graduate Fellowship.



## **Maggie Aguas**

**Programs Director**

**Avance - Austin (Texas)**

Maggie has over 10 years of experience working with the Latino community in various capacities. Her journey began in child welfare in Brownsville, TX where she focused on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children. Motivated by a desire to address systematic issues, she expanded her efforts to combat Intimate Partner Violence in Baltimore, MD, advocating for survivors and fostering healing spaces. Now, as the proud Program Director of AVANCE Austin, she brings her extensive experience, cultural sensitivity, and unwavering commitment to empower and uplift immigrant families. Maggie commits herself to bridging gaps, promoting equity, and providing every child with a quality education while equipping parents with the tools to support their children's growth and success.



## **Karen Aragon**

**Southern CA Director**

**Building Skills Partnership (California)**

Karen Aragon is Building Skills Partnership's Southern CA Director overseeing programming in the Los Angeles, Orange County, and San Diego regions. Karen started her career with BSP in 2014 as the Health Educator & Coordinator. She believes in promoting a holistic approach to health by bringing awareness to the impact from the social determinants of health. More recently, she led the Covid-19 education and vaccination efforts statewide advocating for access to the Covid-19 vaccine among essential workers. Now as the SoCal Director of BSP, Karen supports the BSP team in providing quality programming that positively impacts the lives of property service workers in the areas of workforce development, immigrant integration, and community advancement. Karen is the proud daughter of Salvadoran immigrants and a first-generation college student who earned her B.A. at UCLA and MPH at Loma Linda University. She is also a Master Certified Health Education Specialist (MCHES).



## **Zazil Rojas**

**Family and Student Engagement Specialist**

**Building Skills Partnership (California)**

Zazil Rojas joined Building Skills Partnership's (BSP) as an AmeriCorps VISTA in 2017. As a VISTA, she actively participated in all programs such as Union Hall, Health & Wellness, Financial Capabilities, Parent Engagement and College Access in Los Angeles. In 2019 she joined the organization as staff in the role of Family and Student Engagement Specialist leading the Parent Engagement & College Access program and the Mike Garcia Scholarship where she focuses on giving BSP workers and their children educational opportunities to support academic success. The Parent University initiatives aim to break the cycle of poverty through guidance on navigating the educational system, childhood enrichment opportunities and scholarships. Zazil organizes workshops, trainings, and university visits geared towards informing property service workers about how they can become involved in their children's education to help make their college dreams a reality. She is a graduate of the Universidad de Guadalajara where she lived for 4 years.



## Grace Karambizi

**Lead Organizer**

**Buffalo Immigrant Leadership Team (New York)**

Grace Karambizi was born in Rwanda also known as the Country of a thousand hills. At the age of 8, she became a refugee, moving from place to place, until she was resettled in Buffalo, NY in 2004. Buffalo became home for her; it is the place she could learn and dream again. However, acclimating to her new home has become imaginably challenging. She later realized that these challenges were shared among many refugees and Immigrants. In 2015, Grace was introduced to the organizing world; she quickly developed into a community leader and works to address educational issues affecting immigrant and refugee students in the Buffalo Public Schools. Grace is honored to be the Executive Director of BILT, the same organization that formed her. One of her favorite quotes is from Michelle Obama “...When you’ve worked hard, and done well, and walked through that doorway of opportunity, you do not slam it shut behind you. You reach back and you give other folks the same chances that helped you succeed.” This quote defines the reason she does this work...*continue reading the full bio [here](#).*



## Beh Meh

**Board of Directors - Secretary**

**Buffalo Immigrant Leadership Team (New York)**

Beh Meh is a refugee from the Thailand refugee camp called Ban Mai Nai Soi. She was born in Kayah State in Myanmar and migrated to the refugee camp at age 2. After nine years of living in the camp, Beh and her family moved to the United States and resettled in Buffalo, New York, now her home. She is actively involved in her community and connects well with the immigrant and refugee communities. She has been involved with the education system since high school when she volunteered in her community to assist refugees in navigating the school system. She is a first-generation college grad pursuing her Master's in Education. She is a current English Language Learner (ELL) coordinator serving diverse students. She has been involved with BILT for over five years and is actively engaged in Education related. She is passionate about Education, especially concerning how it affects minorities. Through SCG, she hopes to connect more with other organizations that share similar interests as hers.



## **Maria Paula Zapata**

**Director of Programs**

**Conexión Américas (Tennessee)**

Maria Paula Zapata is the Director of Programs at Conexión Américas, a nonprofit organization based in Nashville, TN whose mission is to build a welcoming community and create opportunities where Latino families can belong, contribute, and succeed. Maria Paula oversees direct-service initiatives and supports the staff team that serves families through various education and economic prosperity programs. Before this role she managed education programming, particularly Padres Comprometidos, which helps Latino parents better understand the school system and advocate for their children. Maria Paula is an adjunct for the Learning, Diversity, and Urban Studies M.Ed program at Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education, where she focuses on helping students connect theory to practice through a guided internship experience. She often serves as a resource for local schools and universities on topics related to serving Latino students, family engagement, and college access. Originally from Colombia, Maria Paula is a first-generation immigrant who is passionate about education and equity. She holds a BA in English and Education from Vassar College and an M.Ed from Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education.



## **Julio C. Salazar**

**Associate Director of Educational Success**

**Conexión Américas (Tennessee)**

Julio C. Salazar is the Associate Director of Educational Success at Conexión Américas, a nonprofit organization based in Nashville, TN, whose mission is to build a welcoming community and create opportunities where Latino families can belong, contribute, and succeed. Julio oversees college access and success programs, direct-service initiatives that serve first-generation college students and Latino students. Before joining Conexión Américas, Julio managed the Ascension Project at the Tennessee Educators of Color Alliance, which provides personal and professional development to future educators of color enrolled in education preparation programs. He is involved in various organizations - from supporting Nashville's queer population to labor rights to voting turnout and access. Originally from Mexico City but raised in East Tennessee since early childhood, Julio is a first-generation immigrant who is passionate about opportunity access for rising Latino professionals and increasing college enrollment and completion for first-generation and Latino students. He holds a BA in Political Science and Education from the University of Notre Dame and an M.Ed from Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education.





## **Nadia Mavrakis**

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Culturingua (Texas)**

As a native Texan and Libyan-American with extensive global experience, Nadia Mavrakis brings the perspective of these worldviews to her role as Chief Executive Officer of Culturingua, a nonprofit that elevates the people and heritage of the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (MENASA). Culturingua brings education opportunities to San Antonio K-12 students to improve their global competencies and activate their voices; immigrant integration programs to enable new Americans to reach their full potential and lead prosperous lives; and economic development programs to support workforce development and small business success for Bexar County residents.

Nadia graduated magna cum laude from The University of Texas at Austin with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Business Strategy and Finance as well as a minor in French. She studied in France and Morocco. She is a HOLT Values-Based Leadership Fellow with the San Antonio Area Foundation. She completed business leadership courses at Harvard Business School, Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management, HEC Paris, and INSEAD. She is fluent in English and speaks French and Arabic. Nadia has worked in the US, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and Singapore.



## **Essam Bouras**

**Community Navigator**

**Culturingua (Texas)**

Essam Bouras is a Community Navigator with Culturingua where he leads workforce development training programs focused on enabling immigrants and refugees to obtain meaningful work and wealth. He has more than 18 years of working experience in the environmental field, which includes natural resources conservation, public awareness, and civil society engagement, as well as more than 8 years working with nonprofit organizations. Throughout his career he worked as a project coordinator with the United Nations Development Programme in Libya where he was involved in several projects funded by international funders. He has more than 4 years of working experience with Middle Eastern and North African immigrants in San Antonio as a field supervisor for a healthcare agency. Essam has Master Degree in Zoology from Tripoli University in Libya, as well as Master Degree in Landscape Design and Environmental Planning from Catania University in Italy.



## Analyssa Garcia

**Advocacy Specialist**

**Culturingua (Texas)**

Analyssa Garcia is the Advocacy Specialist with Culturingua where she leads local, state, and national advocacy efforts to ensure immigrant inclusion. Analyssa graduated from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, TX with a bachelor's degree in political science with a certification in Mexican American Studies and is currently working towards her Master of Arts - Public Administration from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, TX. Prior to joining Culturingua, Analyssa served as an intern for Diego Bernal of the Texas House of Representatives.



## Yolie Flores

**CEO/President**

**Families in Schools (California)**

Yolie has dedicated her career to improving the lives of disadvantaged children and families. Throughout her 30-year career, she has held various leadership, management, consultant and policy positions in city and county government, non-profit organizations, philanthropy, and in elected office. In every position, Yolie has committed herself to lifting up parents and helping ensure that all kids — most especially children from low-income families — grow up with opportunities to lead rich and fulfilling lives.

Born in El Paso, Texas, and raised in Los Angeles, Yolie attended schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) – the same schools she represented as an elected member of the LAUSD Board of Education, where she served for four years, and the kinds of schools and students that she helped bring attention to as CEO of Communities for Teaching Excellence (2010-2012), focused on ensuring an effective teacher for every student, in every classroom, every day.

Upon graduation from Huntington Park High School, Yolie went on to be the first person in her family to attend a four-year university, where she earned a Bachelor's degree from the University of Redlands, and a Master's degree in social welfare from the University of California, Los Angeles...*continue reading the full bio [here](#).*





## Jessie Cuadra, Psy.D.

**President of Strategy and Partnerships**

**Families in Schools (California)**

Self-directed senior level program manager who passionately leverages strong intrapersonal and interpersonal skills in the inclusivity and engagement of staff. 15+ years of leadership and project management experience have honed communicative and analytical skills, strengthening the ability to lead multi-disciplinary teams and forge collaborative relationships.



## Stephen Dages

**Director of Services**

**Hartville Migrant Ministry (Ohio)**

Stephen Graduated from the University of Mount Union in 2018 with majors in Social Work and Religion. After graduation, he served with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, working at two different schools in Dodoma, Tanzania. After returning to the U.S, Stephen went back to Mount Union to work as the University Chaplain for two years before starting his current position as the Director of Services at the Hartville Migrant Center. Stephen is responsible for the general oversight and operations of the center, and ensuring that all services and programs are current and relevant for the needs of the migrant community.



## Angel Jackson

**Board Member/Education Chair**

**Hartville Migrant Ministry (Ohio)**

The Rev. Angel Jackson is Pastor at St. Jacob Lutheran Church in Canton. One of the things that drew her to this congregation was their long-time involvement with the Hartville Migrant Center. Pastor Angel grew up in Louisville, Ohio. She is a graduate of Capital University and got her MDiv at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and her Masters of Social Work at the University of Chicago. Her other calls include being mother to Sophia and Asher, knitting, reading, hiking, paddle boarding and bird watching.



## Diego Uriburu

**Executive Director**

**Identity (Maryland)**

Diego Uriburu co-founded Identity in 1998 to help immigrant youth fleeing violence, natural disasters, and grinding poverty in Latin America. Today, in pursuit of a just, equitable and inclusive society, Identity creates opportunities for Latino and other historically underserved youth across Montgomery County to realize their highest potential and thrive. In 2014, the White House selected him as a César E. Chávez Champion of Change for his work with Latino youth in Montgomery County.



## Nora Morales

**Program Director**

**Identity (Maryland)**

Nora Morales is a Program Director at Identity responsible for Out-of-School Time Elementary and Middle School Programs, Recreation, STEM, and Community and Civic Engagement. Ms. Morales has over 28 years' experience as an educator, district and nonprofit leader, and equity advisor. Prior to working at Identity, Inc., Nora was the Diversity Officer for Prince George's County Public Schools and previous to that was Vice-President of the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. which houses the Region I Equity Assistance Center for the U.S. Department of Education. In both roles, Nora championed increasing educational opportunities and access to a high-quality education for students living in poverty, English Learners, students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, and students with disabilities. Ms. Morales holds a B.A. in Political Science from Tufts University and a M.A. in Educational Policy and Leadership from the University of Maryland, College Park. She is also the proud mother of two college graduates.



## Kwesi Rollins

**Senior Vice President for Leadership and Engagement**

**Institute for Educational Leadership (Washington D.C.)**

A member of IEL's Senior Leadership Team, Kwesi Rollins guides IEL's portfolio of programs designed to develop and support leaders with a particular emphasis on Family and Community Engagement, Early Childhood Education and Community-based Leadership Development. Kwesi directs the District Leaders Network on Family and Community Engagement and Leaders for Today and Tomorrow, an initiative that designs and delivers professional learning and support opportunities for school and district leaders.

Kwesi has years of experience working with local communities and state agencies to improve cross-sector collaboration and service delivery systems supporting children, youth and families. Mr. Rollins provided technical assistance and training to a range of state and county agencies, school districts, local schools and community-based organizations in projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention...*continue reading the full bio [here](#).*



## Sabrina Sheikh

**Immigrant and Refugee Leadership Coordinator**

**Institute for Educational Leadership (Washington D.C.)**

Sabrina coordinates IEL's youth leadership and development portfolio, including specialized leadership development for Immigrant and Refugee Youth as well as the Next Generation Coalition (NGC), an alliance guided by IEL and led by emerging youth leaders to provide a platform for advancing the Community School strategy. NGC serves as a framework for IEL's youth leadership development work, including youth connected to Community School initiatives, youth with disabilities, immigrant, and refugee youth, and more.

Prior to joining IEL, Sabrina worked as a family and youth engagement specialist for Immigrant and Refugee Community Organizing in Portland, Ore. While there, she was responsible for 40 African youth and families in middle and high school...*continue reading the full bio [here](#).*



## Haowen Ge

**Executive Director**

**International Student Services Association (Ohio)**

Haowen Ge is originally from China and moved to Shaker Heights with his mother when he was 12 years old. Haowen experienced and fully understands the challenges and obstacles international students currently face at local public schools. Haowen Ge graduated from the University of Mount Union in 2012 with a B.A. degree in Business Administration. He also received a master's degree in Business Administration at Baldwin Wallace University in 2017. Currently he is also a 2nd-year Ph.D. candidate in the Strategy and Innovation Department at School of Management in Harbin Institute of Technology and visitor scholar at Kent State University. Haowen is the executive director at International Student Services Association and also is the founder at the Haowen Cultural Foundation since 2017. Haowen's personal, educational and work experience uniquely qualifies to provide guidance and assistance to international students. This includes college identification and application, career advising, and financial aid planning to facilitate a potentially difficult process for students that are new to this country.



## Joy Holmes

**Youth Program Specialist Trainee**

**International Student Services Association (Ohio)**

Joy Holmes is a rising junior at the University of Washington, majoring in psychology. Born and raised in Washington she grew up with several close friends whose families had immigrated to the United States. Inspired by their stories Joy joined the student organization, International Unity Initiative (IUI) in 2020. Over zoom, she got the opportunity to collaborate with students from across the world to talk about global issues. In 2021, Joy connected with many international students through Bridges International and was a youth student leader at her local church. Being able to talk with these students was so life-giving, and created a desire in her to continue to serve students from diverse backgrounds. After Joy graduates, she hopes to work as a school counselor or in a related counseling position for students. She also hopes to continue in advocacy work.



## Sujing Chen

**ISSA Community Partnership Outreach Trainee**  
**International Student Services Association (Ohio)**

Sujing Chen is a rising senior at Charles F. Brush High School. She is the founder of Equalistic Dream For Hope, a club that makes an impact on immigrant and undocumented students as it spreads information about problems that these students encounter; and the way that schools can change to let these students have a better experience and learn the necessary need for a bright future. Every Sunday she works at a local church, helping everyone on Zoom and church members have the best experience.

Coming from an immigrant family, she can feel the difficulties of students to overcome language barriers and adapt to their current environment. By being an intern for ISSA she is able to help students with diversity. As she sees what problems immigrant students are facing she will try to help them learn the different information needed in their future careers.



## Punam Subba

**ISSA Youth Program Trainee**  
**International Student Services Association (Ohio)**

Punam Subba is currently a student at Advance Technology Academy of Cuyahoga Community College. She was born and raised in a refugee camp of Nepal. Punam came to America at the age of 10 with her family in late 2014. She is one of the Vice Presidents of a student run and led organization called Equalistic Dream For Hope, an organization that makes an impact on immigrant and undocumented students by giving information about problems these students encounter in schools; and suggest solutions schools can adapt to let these students have a better experience and learn the necessary need for a bright future.

As a refugee student herself, she understands the struggle and challenges most immigrant/refugee/undocumented students go through in daily life at school. ISSA gave her the opportunity to connect and support students like her. She is currently working in ISSA as a Youth Program trainee to support the immigrant/refugee/undocumented students in Northeast Ohio high schools. She likes watching TV shows, reading books, spending time with friends and family and eating delicious food.



## Rosario Hernandez

**Senior Education Policy Analyst**

**Latino Policy Forum**

Rosario Hernandez is the Senior Education Policy Analyst at the Latino Policy Forum. Rosario contributes to the development of the early childhood to 12th-grade education portfolio promoting quality bilingual education programming, equitable access to early childhood programming that is responsive to language and cultural difference, and quality parent engagement.

Rosario's deep level of passion for high-quality education stems from personal and working experiences. As a daughter to immigrant parents raised in La Villita, Chicago, she bore witness to the importance of parent involvement in positive academic and mental health outcomes. Now she seeks to inform, influence, and lead public policy debates in early childhood and bilingual education.

Rosario received her Master of Social Work from the University of Michigan.



## Carlos Mariani Rosa

**Executive Director**

**Minnesota Education Equity Partnership (Minnesota)**

Carlos Mariani Rosa is a distinguished leader in the nonprofit and public sector. Under his tenure, Minnesota Education Equity Partnership has increasingly strengthened its voice as a statewide authority on educational race equity in Minnesota through research on student academic outcomes and social realities, publishing policy briefs, and convening multi-cultural advocacy networks for shifting education policies and practices.

Carlos was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives in 1990, representing St. Paul district 65B. He is a member of the Democratic Farmer-Labor Party (DFL) and has focused his efforts on issues affecting marginalized communities in areas as diverse as; education, economic development, and criminal justice reform...*continue reading the full bio [here](#).*





## Jon Peterson

**Long-Term Program Consultant**

**Minnesota Education Equity Partnership (Minnesota)**

Leiautaua Dr. Jon Peterson is a consultant at Minnesota Education Equity Partnership and the Co-owner, founder, and President/CEO of TE2: Education and Engineering Consulting, LLC. Jon holds a B.S. in Secondary Education from the University of Wisconsin – River Falls, an M.A. in Public Policy, and an Ed. D. in Leadership, both from the University of St. Thomas. Jon brings 20 years of experience in E-12 public and private education to his work as a principal consultant. Additionally, Jon is a licensed teacher, K-12 Principal, and Superintendent and has experience leading programs, schools, and services in large, urban educational settings. Lastly, Jon is a published author and recording artist having concurrently released, in 2018, his book, “Uncovering Indigenous Models of Leadership,” and extended play album, “Heart of the Matter...”...*continue reading the full bio [here](#).*



## Whitney Fields

**Director, Family Leadership**

**National Center for Families Learning (Kentucky)**

As the Director of Family Leadership, Whitney supports a team around NCFL's family leadership work. Such work includes programs like Activate! Local and Activate! National, and other co-design and coalition-building work aimed at family-based leadership opportunities. Prior to joining NCFL, she worked at United Way of Central Indiana in a variety of 2Gen-type roles and most recently served as 2Gen Partnerships and Engagement Director. In that role, she led a wide array of learning-based opportunities relating to the 2Gen model, served as a support to their grantee pool of 34 community-based organizations, and started a pilot parent advisory council. Prior to United Way, she worked at a national Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI) engaging with community around health equity and quality of life-related work...*continue reading the full bio [here](#).*



## Pious Ali

**Director**

**Portland Empowered (Maine)**

Pious joined the Portland Empowered program in 2010 (11) since its inception at the City of Portland Refugee Service. When it relocated to the University of Southern Maine Cutler Institute in 2014, Pious followed. He is focused on creating opportunities for unengaged members of our community to be heard through their own voices and empowering young people to speak up for themselves. He is inspired by his work at PE because it gives a voice to all members of our community and provides a platform for students, families, and their school districts to engage each other and make education the best it can be for all students. He is committed to this work because it levels the playing field for students who have been left behind, and creates equity in a system that prepares young citizens from all backgrounds for participation in American democratic and public life. Among other things, Pious likes to meet new people and talk about public and civic engagement over a cup of tea.



## Patrick Kearns

**Executive Director**

**The Refugee Response (Ohio)**

Patrick Kearns started as the Executive Director of the Refugee Response in late 2016. Prior to this Patrick worked in South East Asia for 14 years. This included two years in Umphum Mai refugee camp on the Thai- Myanmar border where he founded a school for young adults. He then opened a Thai Foundation working with stateless youth that included opening and running an award winning social enterprise hotel. From 2014 to 2016 Patrick worked as the Director for World Education in Thailand and Myanmar implementing a US State Department grant reaching over 300,000 individuals. In 2014 he was a recipient of the Unsung Heroes of Compassion Award presented by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He is a graduate of Miami University in Oxford Ohio and holds an MPA from Ohio University as well as an MS in Emergency and Crisis Management from University of Nevada Las Vegas.



# Amy Moniot

**Director of Education**

**The Refugee Response (Ohio)**

Amy joined The Refugee Response in 2023 as the Director of Education. She holds advocacy and inclusion close to her heart and has built a career helping those from international backgrounds find paths to success. After seven years in International Programs at Oberlin College and Conservatory, she spent two years creating and implementing a high school to college bridge program between International Newcomers' Academy and Cuyahoga Community College. She has spent time as an English language teacher in Mexico and Thailand. She served for two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Georgia. In 2019, she was awarded a fellowship from the U.S. Department of State to teach at Mandalay University in Myanmar (Burma). She holds a Master of Education in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages from Cleveland State University and a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from The University of Akron. She lives in the Ohio City neighborhood of Cleveland and enjoys stopping for coffee on her walk to work.