

## National Immigration Summit: Centering the Needs of Children & Families

June, 23, 2022 | 10:00 am to 1:00 pm (CT)

*Speakers in order of appearance*



**Guadalupe Fernández, Director, Children's Immigration Network, [CHILDREN AT RISK](#)**

Guadalupe Fernández joined CHILDREN AT RISK in 2022. As the Director of the Children's Immigration Network, she is responsible for the development and advancement of CHILDREN AT RISK's advocacy projects and campaigns to transform the policies and practices that impact immigrant children and families across Texas. Guadalupe is committed to advancing justice and equity by building collective power among immigrant families, advocates, and allies.

Guadalupe joins C@R with a wealth of experience advocating for rights and policy for migrant children and families at all levels of advocacy: individual, systems, and social change. As the Senior Policy and Advocacy Manager at the Tahirih Justice Center's Houston office, she developed the first program for local and state advocacy on policies that impact immigrant survivors of gender-based violence. Over the years, she has served on multiple local and state-wide coalitions, working groups, and task forces. Guadalupe is also a consultant for Praxis International, where she mentors domestic violence programs across the country in strengthening their individual, institutional, and social change advocacy to end all forms of gender-based violence. Guadalupe is the proud daughter of immigrants and a first-generation college graduate from Georgetown University.



**Wendy Cervantes, Director of Immigration and Immigrant Families, [Center for Law and Social Policy \(CLASP\)](#)**

Wendy Cervantes is director of immigration and immigrant families. In this role, she oversees the organization's cross-team work to develop and advocate for policies that support low-income immigrants and their families. She is an expert on the cross-sector policy issues that impact children of immigrants, including economic security, child welfare, immigration, education, health care, and human rights.

Prior to joining CLASP, Ms. Cervantes was Vice President of Immigration and Child Rights at First Focus where she led the organization's federal policy work on immigration and established the Center for the Children of Immigrants. Ms. Cervantes also served as Director of Programs at La Plaza, a Latino community-based organization in central Indiana, where she oversaw the implementation and evaluation of education, health, and social service programs. Earlier in her career, Ms. Cervantes worked at the Annie E. Casey Foundation where she managed the national immigrant and refugee families and the District of Columbia portfolios. She also has experience as a community organizer and an adult ESL instructor. The proud daughter of Mexican immigrants, Ms. Cervantes holds an M.A. in Latin American Studies and Political Science from the University of New Mexico and a B.A. in Communications from the University of Southern California.



**Mayra Alvarez, President, [The Children's Partnership](#)**

Mayra E. Alvarez, MHA is President of The Children's Partnership, a nonprofit advocacy organization working to advance child health equity by ensuring all children have the resources and opportunities they need to grow up healthy and thrive. In 2021, she was named by President Joe Biden to the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force. In 2019, she was nominated by California Gov. Gavin Newsom to serve on the First 5 California Commission and the Early Childhood Policy Council and in 2017, by then-Attorney General Xavier Becerra to serve on the California Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC).

Prior to The Children's Partnership, Ms. Alvarez completed a several-year set of assignments at the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in the administration of President Barack Obama. She served as the Director of the State Exchange Group for the Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and led a team responsible for supporting states in the establishment of Health Insurance Marketplaces. Previously, Ms. Alvarez served as the Associate Director for the HHS Office of Minority Health, where she led the coordination of OMH's work related to the Affordable Care Act, community health workers and language access. Prior to this role, Ms. Alvarez served as Director of Public Health Policy in the Office of Health Reform at HHS where she had primary oversight responsibility for coordinated and timely implementation of the public health, prevention and health care workforce policy provisions in the Affordable Care Act.

Before joining the Obama Administration, Ms. Alvarez served as a Legislative Assistant for Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and for then-Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis (D-CA). Ms. Alvarez began her professional career as a David A. Winston Health Policy Fellow in the office of then-Senator Barack Obama (D-IL).

She completed her graduate education at the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her undergraduate education at the University of California at Berkeley. She is originally from outside San Diego, CA, and is the proud daughter of Mexican immigrants.



**Dr. Bob Sanborn, President & CEO, [CHILDREN AT RISK](#)**

Dr. Sanborn is a noted leader, advocate, and activist for education and children and the President and CEO of CHILDREN AT RISK. He earned his undergraduate degree at Florida State University and his doctorate at Columbia University in New York City. Before entering the non-profit sector, he had a distinguished career in higher education at institutions such as Rice University and Hampshire College.

Under his leadership, CHILDREN AT RISK has expanded its influence considerably. Notable achievements include opening centers in Dallas and Fort Worth; launching the Public Policy & Law Center, the CHILDREN AT RISK Institute, the Center for Parenting and Family Well-Being and the Center to End Trafficking and Exploitation of Children. Sanborn is the Executive Editor of two peer reviewed, open-access academic journals, the Journal of Applied Research on Children and the Journal of Family Strengths.



**Juan Carlos Gomez, Policy Analyst, Immigration and Immigrant Families, [Center for Law and Social Policy \(CLASP\)](#)**

Juan Carlos Gomez is a policy analyst for CLASP's immigration and immigrant families team. He works with the rest of the team to uplift policies that support immigrant families, such as securing access to public benefits and ensuring that children in immigrant families have the support and resources necessary to succeed.

Prior to joining CLASP, Juan was a Legislative Aide for Senator Cory Booker, working on immigration, health care, and workforce issues. His work in the U.S. Senate focused on addressing health care inequities and immigration enforcement policies. Before working in the Senate, Juan was a Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute intern in the House of Representatives. Juan graduated from Montclair State University with a bachelor's degree in both Political Science and Psychology.



**Bilal Askaryar, Communications Coordinator, [Welcome with Dignity Campaign](#)**

Bilal Askaryar is the communications coordinator for the #WelcomeWithDignity Campaign, a national campaign for asylum rights in the United States. The Women's Refugee Commission is a member of the campaign. Before joining WRC, Bilal worked with the Immigration and Refugee Program at Church World Service, where he led major media engagement strategies to rebuild support for the United States Refugee Admissions Program and dismantle the Muslim Ban. Previously, he led a landmark collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and Turquoise Mountain Foundation to bring former refugee and internally displaced artisans from Afghanistan to showcase their

work at the Freer and Sackler Galleries. While pursuing his master's degree in international development at the School of International Service at American University, Bilal was the communications liaison at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington, DC, where he led the embassy's media relations.



**Carolina Canizales, Senior Texas Campaign Strategist, [Texas Immigration Legal Resource Center](#)**

Carolina is the Senior Texas Campaign Strategist at the Immigrant Legal Resource Center. In her role, she helps build organizing and advocacy capacity to fight back the criminalization, incarceration, and deportation of immigrant communities in Texas. Carolina has worked in immigrant justice for the last 12 years. Carolina has a B.A. in Communications (2012) and a Master's in Public Administration (2019) from the University of Texas at San Antonio. She is fluent in Spanish.



**Miriam Abaya, Vice President, Immigration and Children's Rights, [First Focus on Children](#)**

Miriam is the Senior Director for Immigration and Children's Rights at First Focus. Before joining First Focus, Miriam was a Policy Analyst at the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights, where she advocated for immigration policies that would protect the best interests and rights of unaccompanied children in government custody. While at the Young Center, Miriam focused on access to the asylum, border policies, and due process for immigrant children. Miriam also advocated before international bodies, regarding U.S. immigration policy, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Miriam graduated from Temple University Beasley School of Law in 2017. During law school,

Miriam was a 2015 Law & Public Policy Scholar and interned with the DOJ Office of Immigration Litigation, the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, and the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy. After law school, Miriam was a Law & Public Policy Fellow for the Law & Public Policy Program, where she conducted research on international justice outreach on the African continent. That research was later published in the UCLA Journal of International Law & Foreign Affairs. She also worked part-time for the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative, where she supported a project on victim participation in the Central African Republic's Special Criminal Court. Miriam is Nigerian American and grew up in Jos, Nigeria.



**Viviana Westbrook, State & Local Advocacy Attorney, [Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. \(CLINIC\)](#)**

Viviana has been at CLINIC since August 2020 working on state and local matters which impact immigrants across the 50 states as well as Washington D.C. She first began work in immigration law as a paralegal in 2005. She graduated from Georgetown Law in 2010 with a Certificate in Refugees and Humanitarian Emergencies. Since moving to Maryland, Viviana has had experience with various immigration nonprofits in the Washington region, including the Central American Resource Center, Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition, Kids in Need of Defense, the Esperanza Center, and, most recently, she worked with survivors of gender-based violence at the Tahirih Justice Center. At CLINIC, Viviana

provides strategic and technical support to state and local-level immigrant advocates, State Catholic Conferences, diocesan agencies, religious communities, and community organizers in their work on immigrant-related state legislation, local ordinances, federal/state enforcement partnerships, and other local engagements impacting immigrant communities. She is admitted to the bar in Maryland. She grew up in Mexico and is a native Spanish and English speaker.



**Betzabel Estudillo, Senior Advocate, [Nourish California \(formerly California Food Policy Advocates\)](#)**

Betzabel, Senior Advocate, joined Nourish California in 2020. She oversees the organization's #Food4All Campaign to increase food access among immigrant Californians. Betzabel also works to ensure students' access to school meals and increase immigrant participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Betzabel Estudillo has more than a decade of experience in immigration, health and public benefits working in the non-profit and labor sector. Her areas of expertise include policy development and analysis, legislative and budget advocacy, coalition building, and community outreach. Betzabel is a member of the Los Angeles County

Community Prevention and Population Health Task Force and the Los Angeles County COVID 19 Community Advisory Council. Prior to joining Nourish California, Betzabel was at the Miguel Contreras Foundation and the California Immigrant Policy Center. Her passion for health and food justice stems from her experience as a former undocumented immigrant. Betzabel obtained her Masters in Social Work from the University of California Los Angeles, Luskin School of Public Affairs.



**Jasmine Rangel, Research Specialist, [Eviction Lab](#)**

Jasmine holds a Master of Public Policy from the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy at the University of Virginia and a B.A. from Berry College in Political Science, with a minor in Women's Studies. During her time at UVA, Jasmine worked closely with local housing nonprofits to conduct research on the Charlottesville housing market and created an advocacy program in partnership with Habitat for Humanity of Greater Charlottesville. Currently, she is a Research Specialist at the Eviction Lab. Prior to joining the Lab, Jasmine worked as a program associate with the Bonner Foundation and as a Public Policy and Advocacy Intern at Habitat for Humanity.



**Jessie Mandle, Deputy Director and Senior Health Policy Analyst, [Voices for Utah Children](#)**

Jessie joined the organization in 2015. She focuses on health coverage, access to care, prevention and health equity for children, families, and communities in Utah. Prior to joining Voices for Utah Children, Jessie was a Senior Program Planner with the City of San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Their Families where she worked on after school and nutrition programs and policy. Jessie has also worked as a policy researcher in Johannesburg, South Africa, and managed a CDC-funded healthy communities grant in Portland, Oregon. Jessie studied government and environmental science at Wesleyan University in Connecticut and has a Master's degree from Portland State University

and the Oregon Health and Science University School of Public Health.



**Sergio Aguilar-Gaxiola, [UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities](#)**

Sergio Aguilar-Gaxiola, MD, PhD is Professor of Clinical Internal Medicine, School of Medicine, UC Davis. He is the Founding Director of the UCD Center for Reducing Health Disparities and the Director of the Community Engagement Program of the Clinical Translational Science Center (CTSC). He is a member of the National Advisory Council-Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA)-Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), the Clinical and Translational Science Award Collaboration and Engagement Enterprise Committee' Lead Team, and board member of the California Health Care Foundation, the Physicians for a Healthy California, and the Public

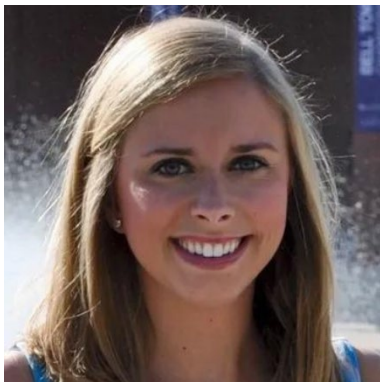
Health Institute. He serves on the Executive Committee of the World Health Organizations' (WHO) World Mental Health Survey Consortium (WMH) and is its Coordinator for Latin America. Dr. Aguilar-Gaxiola is co-chair of the Organizing Committee of the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) Assessing Meaningful Community Engagement. He is the author of over 190 publications and the recipient of multiple international, national, state, and local awards.



**Muleba Sumbwe, Wellness Resource Coordinator, Undocublack**

Serving as a Community Wellness Coordinator at UndocuBlack, with a strong passion for quality health and access to health care education and resources in local communities in the U.S and across Africa. She has launched her own initiative Keyz2Africa, which serves in harnessing the power of information and communications technology to improve the lives of people in the most difficult circumstances.

A writer with a passion for storytelling, she creates and facilitates safe spaces through conversations and art to empower vulnerable people, giving them the tools they need to connect, communicate, coordinate and create a better future for themselves and also have access to quality health.



**Catherine Hinshaw, Policy Manager, Justice for Migrant Women**

Catherine is from North Carolina and first discovered her passion for policy and public service during a Washington, D.C. experience in high school. Moving to D.C. in 2016, she joined the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda where she led digital engagement and supported advocacy on issues including immigration, labor and women's rights.

Most recently, Catherine managed state government affairs at the American Planning Association, working with community planners to elevate their community's priorities in state capitols across the country. Knowing her neighbors and building relationships is important to Catherine, so she prioritizes that in all aspects of life. Catherine holds a Bachelors of Arts in Political Science and in Spanish from Furman University.



**Evalyn Kuang, DNP, PMHNP-BC, Board Certified Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner**

As a psycho-dynamically trained and Board Certified Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Dr. Kuang provides person-centered, trauma informed psychotherapy and medication management with an intersectional and decolonized lens. She completed her graduate studies at Columbia School of Nursing. With over 10 years of professional experience comprising of translational research, health informatics, clinical teaching and clinical practice, Dr.Kuang seeks to address the gaps in understanding and addressing implicit bias in healthcare providers, trauma informed care, intersectionality and ethnic identity formation as pertains to improving quality of and access to mental health care for people of color with a focus on Asian-Americans. Dr.Kuang has experience in sexual health, geriatric psychiatry, working with HIV positive LGBTQ+ youth, and Asian American community. Since 2019, she has been working at Charles B. Wang Community Health Center (CBWCHC)-the largest FQHC serving Asian-Americans in the country where she treats patients and families across the

lifespan 18 years and older, many of which are immigrants and undocumented from varying generations with problems that span from ADHD, Autism, PTSD to schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. She recently created and spearheaded a TaskForce to StopAsianHate in 2021 for CBWCHC, organizing self-defense/bystander trainings, racial trauma education workshops, compiling Anti-Hate Safety resources, and creating PSA for the community and staff. When not working, Dr. Kuang enjoys writing music, boxing, cooking, video games, and spending time with her partner and tabby cat.



**Melissa Brannan, Producer, [Rational Middle Media](#)**

Melissa Brannan comes to the Rational Middle with a wealth of event and logistical experience. She produces the Rational Middle Podcast and is responsible for conducting research, organizing and scheduling production. She works with various vendors and partners to accomplish the highest quality production on time and on budget. Her work with the Rational Middle team includes The Rational Middle of Immigration, The Rational Middle Podcast, and Unexpected Modernism.



**Lynn Tramonte, Director, [Ohio Immigrant Alliance](#)**

After twenty years working for national immigration organizations, Lynn Tramonte launched a communications consulting practice, Anacaona, in 2018. Anacaona tells stories that compel people to see and feel our shared humanity through advocacy communications, developmental editing, and coaching in writing and media relations. Lynn also directs the Ohio Immigrant Alliance, a group of immigrants and allies working together to make Ohio a better place for immigrants. Anacaona and the Ohio Immigrant Alliance recently published “Far From Their Eyes: Ohio Migration Anthology.”

Lynn and her work have been profiled in Cleveland Scene, La Mega Nota, and Columbus Free Press, among other outlets. She is a 2018 Marshall Memorial Fellow with the German Marshall Fund.



**Elaine de Leon, Director of Communications, [Tahirih Justice Center](#)**

Elaine de Leon Ahn joined Tahirih in 2019. As Director of Communications, Elaine leads the organization’s efforts to leverage the power of storytelling, public relations, and marketing to support and advocate for immigrant survivors of gender-based violence. Prior to joining Tahirih, Elaine served as Communications Director at various nonprofit policy and advocacy organizations including Young Invincibles, the Institute for Policy Studies, and the Death Penalty Information Center. She has also served as an Account Manager at Vanguard Communications in Washington, D.C., where she helped build, launch, and manage multifaceted national public education and awareness campaigns. Elaine also served on the Board of Directors of Share, a national organization that serves families who have experienced pregnancy or infant loss, and has been featured in publications about pregnancy and infant loss. Elaine has

lived in Cairo, Egypt where she worked with a local organization providing a broad range of services to refugees from Africa.

*“I feel incredibly lucky to be a part of an organization that takes a holistic approach to serving immigrant survivors of gender-based violence – an organization that recognizes that wider, systemic change is needed while it is actively working to meet the needs of each person who comes through our doors. As a Filipino immigrant, I am inspired by Tahirih’s commitment to center the voices of immigrant survivors, and I am committed to letting that guide the work I do as a communicator for the organization.”*



**Nekessa Opoti, Communications Director, [Black Alliance for Just Immigration](#)**

Nekessa Opoti is a former journalist, editor, producer, writer, communications strategist, and immigrant justice organizer. For over fifteen years, she worked as a journalist and print/web news editor, and publisher. Her work promotes a grassroots articulation of often unheard voices. Her work promotes a grassroots articulation of often ignored and marginalized voices. Her work challenges: racism, particularly anti-Black racism; class and workers rights; migration and displacement; access to public education; state surveillance, gender, sexuality, identity, and belonging from a queer Black femme immigrant lens.

For the past five years, her work as a communications strategist informs local, state, and federal policy while being anchored by community voices and experiences. She has worked on: education and healthcare access as well as immigration issues including driver’s licenses, detention & deportation defense, and advocacy for under and undocumented immigrants. She has consulted with local and national foundations, coalitions as well as government agencies agitating and pushing for an undoing of institutional harm and state violence. Nekessa is one of the co-founders of the Minnesota based [Black Immigrant Collective](#) and a member of the [Black LGBTIA+ Migrant Project](#). Nekessa grew up on the shores of Lake Victoria in Kenya where mangoes were in abundance. She now lives in Minneapolis, thousands of miles away from the equator.

