



WORLD REFUGEE DAY VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM

World Refugee Day, designated by the United Nations as June 20th, is an international day held to celebrate and honor refugees around the globe. It serves not only to call attention to the strength and courage needed to make such difficult journeys and the challenges refugees face locally and globally, but as a call to action for public officials and the community to advocate for our refugee rights. Oregon joins this conversation through the 2022 World Refugee Day Virtual Symposium, as we listen to first-hand accounts by fellow Oregonians of their refugee experiences, discuss Oregon's current process of refugee resettlement, and examine how Oregon can better serve its refugee community.

Zoom | Tuesday, June 21, 2022
bit.ly/2022WRD

OPENING REMARKS

9:30 - 10:05 AM
(35 Minutes)

Land Acknowledgement and Blessing Ceremony
Oregon State Senator Kayse Jama
Oregon Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
U.S. Senator Ron Wyden and U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley

BREAK

10:05 - 10:15 AM

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY: STORIES OF EXCLUSION AND BELONGING

10:15 - 11:20 AM
(65 Minutes)

Description: World Refugee Day is an opportunity to honor refugees around the globe and shine a light on their rights, needs, and dreams. In this session, the audience in this session will hear personal stories from a variety of inspiring community leaders as they share their journeys and what it means to be refugees in Oregon.

Facilitator: Carol Suzuki, Oregon Legislature Senate Majority Office

Panelists:

- Oregon State Senator Kayse Jama, Refugee from Somalia
- Honorable Judge Chanpone Sinlapasai, Refugee from Laos
- Officer Natasha Haunsperger, Refugee from Croatia
- Seyedahmad Ahmadi, Refugee from Iran
- Doctor Thu Vu, Refugee from Vietnam
- Hussein Al-Baiaty, Refugee from Iraq

BREAK

11:20 - 11:30 AM

CELEBRATE THE IMPACT: THE ROLE OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN OREGON'S WORKFORCE

11:30 AM - 12:55 PM
(85 Minutes)

Description: Many immigrants and refugees in Oregon who held advanced degrees from foreign universities or were professionally trained are working in low-wage jobs when their education and experience could be better utilized as a competitive advantage for businesses. Additionally, traditional methods of recruiting talent have not worked when reaching communities of color or English Language Learners as many members of those communities do not know where to look for jobs. This in-depth presentation will cover innovations and alternate pathways to licensure to help Oregon further diversify our workforce, gain a competitive advantage with multicultural talent that exists in this community and better reflects a changing global customer base.

Presenters:

- Leani García Torres, American Immigration Council
- Mari Watanabe, Partnership In Diversity
- Andrew McGough, Worksystems
- Leisl Wehmueller, Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization
- Nura Elmagbari, Portland Refugee Support Group

BREAK

12:55 - 1:05 PM

READY TO LEARN: UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM AND THE BASICS OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

1:05 - 1:50 PM
(45 Minutes)

Description: Refugee resettlement is one of the very few pathways for immigrants and refugees to resettle and integrate. While adjusting to life in a new community is complex and varied, refugee resettlement is a distinct process that begins overseas. Before individuals and families are provided a Refugee Visa and travel to the US is granted, refugees are required to pass a rigorous vetting process overseas that makes refugees the most thoroughly screened people who resettle to the United States. In this session, the audience will learn the basics of the refugee resettlement process, including key terminologies, an overview of the process and common misconceptions.

Presenters:

- Toc Soneoulay-Gillespie, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement
- Matthew Westerbeck, Catholic Charities of Oregon
- Caroline van der Harten, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

BREAK

1:50 - 2:00 PM

READY TO WELCOME: REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT ACROSS OREGON

2:00 - 3:00 PM
(60 Minutes)

Description: Once an international model for welcoming refugees, U.S. Refugee Resettlement Programs are rebuilding their capacity after racist bans and severe budget cuts from the previous administration. Refugee resettlement providers in Oregon have always played a critical role by welcoming in arriving families each week and rebuilding our state's refugee resettlement infrastructure. In this session, the audience will learn about the current successes, challenges, and opportunities to strengthen Oregon's bipartisan legacy as a welcoming state.

Facilitator: Mical Yohannes, Legislative Black, Indigenous and people of color Caucus

Panelists:

- Matthew Westerbeck, Catholic Charities of Oregon
- Luke Glaze, Salem for Refugees
- Christine Zeller-Powell, Catholic Community Services of Lane County
- Renee Cummings, Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization

BREAK

3:00 - 3:10

READY TO ADVOCATE: LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

3:10 - 4:20 PM
(70 Minutes)

Description: Although many policies that significantly impact immigrant and refugee communities are decided at the federal level, Oregon has always had a strong record of creating innovative programs that tackle this humanitarian need. In this session, the audience will learn more about the implementation of these programs.

Facilitator: Leland Baxter-Neal, Latino Network

Topics:

- \$18M Afghan Investments, Department of Human Services
- Bias Response and Sanctuary Promise Hotlines, Department of Justice
- Universal Legal Representation, Innovation Law Lab
- Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement

CLOSING REMARKS

4:20 - 4:30 PM
(10 Minutes)

Kien Truong, Chief of Staff to Oregon State Senator Kayse Jama