



Speaker Bios

Vesna Anic is a Career Development Specialist for the Fort Bend Women's Center. With a vast experience as a recruiter and career counselor, she has helped more than 2,500 individuals find employment. Vesna has been working as a webmaster for more than two decades. She created and maintains a secure client website, enhancing accessibility of service for survivors of intimate partner and sexual violence. Vesna also serves as a Learning Resource Coordinator; she identifies survivors' needs for classes and workshops, connects with volunteers and organizations, and coordinates the events.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout – Texas Economic Justice Initiatives Panel*

Shari Bloomberg, LCSW, is the Clinical Director of Domestic Violence Services/Rachel Coalition at Jewish Family Service of MetroWest in New Jersey. In addition to clinical work and program development, she teaches many of the sessions for the 40-hour domestic violence volunteer advocate training. She has served as the co-chair of the Essex County Domestic Violence Working Group on Children Exposed to Violence, on the Executive Directors' panel for the New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence, and on the Consortium for Project SARAH, addressing domestic violence in the Orthodox Jewish community. An expert on the topic, she has been working in the field of domestic violence for more than 25 years, receiving numerous awards for her work focusing on the needs of adult victims and children exposed to violence.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout – Providing Inclusive, Holistic Financial Empowerment Services to Marginalized Survivors*

Rebecca Christ of the Fresh Start Women's Foundation was first trained as a Victim Services Advocate in 2012 and began utilizing the Allstate Foundation's Moving Ahead curriculum in April 2017. In her current roles, she teaches tools for stress and behavioral management as a Faculty Associate at Arizona State University and is the Social Work & Special Projects Senior Manager at Fresh Start Women's Foundation, an organization dedicated to providing education, resources, and support for women to positively transform their lives and strengthen our community. Having earned her Master's in Public Administration and Master's in Social Work from Arizona State University, she is committed to focusing her work on creating opportunities for people to harness their power and succeed.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout – Leveraging Local Experts to Strengthen your Economic Justice Program*

Leslie Contreras Schwartz is the fourth Houston Poet Laureate, serving from 2019-2021. She is a multi-genre writer and the author of three collections of poems, including *Nightbloom & Cenote*, *Fuego*, and the forthcoming *Who Speaks For Us?* In 2018, she was a featured poet for the 2018 Houston Poetry Fest. A member of the Macondo Writers' Workshop, her work examines the individual versus public bodies and documents narratives of those usually silenced, including people with mental illness, sex workers, women who are trafficked, or children in custody. A native Houstonian, she is a graduate of The Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College and earned a bachelor's at Rice University.

- *Tuesday, June 18th, Welcome Reception*
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Krista Del Gallo is a Policy Manager at the Texas Council on Family Violence. Her work focuses on researching, analyzing, and promoting laws, policies, and options that expand the critical social safety nets for survivors of family violence, with a particular focus on housing and broader economic stability, health, immigration, and child custody. Krista has been working within the domestic violence and sexual assault movements since 1994. She has done case management, children's advocacy, legal advocacy, and training at crisis programs in rural Indiana, the Rosebud Lakota Reservation in South Dakota, and Austin, Texas. Krista received the 2012 Woman of the Year Award for Economic Empowerment from the YWCA of Greater Austin.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Housing Panel - HUD Continuum of Care, Housing Advocacy & Housing Stability Funds*
 - *Thursday, June 20th, Panel - Creating and Implementing Economic Policy Change*
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Paige Diner is an Associate with Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund (CFE Fund), a national nonprofit that partners with local government to improve individual and family financial stability. Through grant funding and technical assistance, Paige supports coalitions across the country to increase access to safe and affordable bank and credit union accounts. Previously, Paige taught middle school Spanish as a Teach for America corps member in Washington, DC, Public Schools. She holds an MSW in Social Enterprise Administration from Columbia University and a BA in Sociology from Vanderbilt University.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Panel - Credit Unions & Unbanked Immigrants, Establishing Affordable Banking & Banking Partnerships*
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Carolyn Fenton, FSW Educator/Coach, is the Financial Abuse Literacy Regional Coordinator at SAFE in Hunterdon. A Domestic Violence Response Team volunteer since 2009, in 2011 Ms. Fenton became a Case Manager at SAFE, providing weekly goal planning using the Allstate Purple Purse Moving Ahead Through Financial Management Curriculum. Ms. Fenton now focuses on Yoga and Financial Empowerment and teaches Trauma-Informed Career and Financial Planning for NJCEDV's statewide online and in-person Purple Purse initiative. Ms. Fenton also

trains drug, alcohol, and mental health providers, staff in the state women's prison, wellness centers, students, foundations, and other domestic violence organizations throughout the state. She is a Certified Financial Social Work Educator/Coach and current participant in the MSW program at Rutgers University. Ms. Fenton is also a Realtor and Vice President of Fenton Electrical Contracting, Inc.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout – Providing Inclusive, Holistic Financial Empowerment Services to Marginalized Survivors*
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Ana Gonzalez is the Policy Director for the Workers Defense Project. WDP is a membership-based organization that empowers low-income workers to achieve fair employment through education, direct services, organizing, and strategic partnerships. Ana was born in El Paso, Texas, and raised in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Ana worked in the Texas State Legislature beginning in 2013; in 2015, after the session ended she decided to join the Workers Defense Project due to her passion to help her community. Ana has led strategic policy local and state campaigns and is devoted to ensuring that immigrant families and workers have a voice at all levels of government.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout Session – Economic Justice: Living in the Margins*
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Sarah Gonzalez Bocinski is the program manager of Economic Justice and Workforce Initiatives at Futures Without Violence. Sarah works on FUTURES' initiatives relating to economic justice and security, safety and gender equity in the workplace, and improving access to quality employment opportunities for survivors of trafficking and gender-based violence. Prior to joining FUTURES, she oversaw the Economic Security for Survivors Project, a national training, technical assistance, and research project at the Institute for Women's Policy Research and Wider Opportunities for Women. Sarah received her BA from Colgate University and MPP from the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout Session – Engaging Employers in Building Safe & Supportive Workplaces*
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Madeline Gregory joined The Allstate Foundation in 2017 and currently leads the national Purple Purse grant program as well as the distribution of the Allstate Foundation Moving Ahead curriculum, a financial management resource for domestic violence survivors. She previously held roles within Allstate Insurance Company, where she supported company-wide reputation research and internal communications. Since 2005, The Allstate Foundation, in partnership with the National Network to End Domestic Violence, has empowered more than 1.7 million survivors with financial tools, helping them move from short-term safety to long-term security.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout – Leveraging Local Experts to Strengthen your Economic Justice Program*
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Pronita Gupta is CLASP's job quality director. Pronita promotes policy solutions that create more responsive workplaces, improve job quality for workers, strengthen worker protections, and increase economic security for low-income working families. She brings expertise in the areas of paid family and medical leave, pay equity, and other workplace labor standards. Prior to joining CLASP, Ms. Gupta served as the deputy director of the women's bureau in the U.S. Department of Labor under President Obama. In that role, she worked to advance and improve standards, practices, and opportunities for women in the labor force. She also previously served as senior director of programs for the Women Donors Network (WDN), as well as research director for Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy. Pronita has extensive experience in community and labor organizing. She served as research director for SCOPE/AGENDA in Los Angeles, where she helped develop their health care jobs campaign, and as research director for the Living Wage Campaign at the LA Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE). Additionally, Ms. Gupta served as executive director of Institute for Southern Studies and legislative director for the U.S. Student Association. She holds an MPA from Columbia University and a BA in Government from Clark University.

➤ *Wednesday, June 19th, General Session – Economic Justice: Living in the Margins*

Cynthia Hess is Associate Director of Research at the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) and Scholar in Residence at American University. In this capacity, she oversees IWPR research on numerous issues, including recent projects on intimate partner violence, workforce development, and the future of care work. Under her tenure, IWPR expanded its longstanding Status of Women in States project and launched an accompanying website, StatusOfWomenData.org. Cynthia recently led an IWPR research team in conducting a national survey on the impact of abusive relationships on survivors' careers, education, and economic security. Prior to joining IWPR, she taught for two years as a visiting faculty member in the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department at St. Mary's College of Maryland. Her scholarly work focused on the intersection of feminist theory, theology, and peace studies, and her publications include *Sites of Violence*, *Sites of Grace: Christian Nonviolence and the Traumatized Self* as well as articles on terrorism, traumatic violence, and religious peacemaking.

➤ *Thursday, June 20th, Breakout - The Economic Effects of Abuse: Findings from a National Survey*

Jessica Howton is the Managing Attorney at Tahirih Justice Center's Houston office. Jessica is currently in her seventh year with Tahirih, leading Houston's legal team as they advocate on behalf of immigrant survivors of violence from all over the world. Jessica provides direct representation to asylum seekers, survivors of human trafficking, unaccompanied immigrant children, and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and female genital mutilation. Additionally, Jessica provides technical assistance and mentorship to pro bono attorneys and community partners on an individual basis as well as through conducting trainings and CLEs. She has served as the Texas State Bar Immigration Taskforce co-chair and is a community partner with the Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council and Houston Immigration and Legal Services

Collaborative's crime victim working group. Jessica is a graduate from the University of Notre Dame Law School.

➤ *Wednesday, June 19th, General Session – Economic Justice: Living in the Margins*

Mona Kafeel serves as Chief Philanthropy & Operating Officer at Texas Muslim Women's Foundation (TMWF), an educational, philanthropic, and social service non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women and their families through multifaceted programs. Mona is responsible for running all facets of the organization. Her extensive work with the grass root community has led her to be on the Public Policy Commission of Texas Council on Family Council. The policy team researches, works on, and eventually crafts the legislative agenda pertaining to intimate partner violence to ensure that survivor voices are included. Mona also serves on the Senior Advisory Board for senior citizens to the Mayor of City of Plano. In this capacity, she advises the city council on the issues that are important to seniors living in Plano. Working with seniors has led her to form a nonprofit for culturally specific programs that supports healthy lifestyles for the seniors. She is also steering a youth led initiative in high schools across Dallas to educate young people and prevent teen violence. Mona created the Environmental Education Program for children in Plano Independent School District schools. She was awarded "Education Mentor" by the City of Plano for her work. Her previous work with Texas Interfaith led her to develop community programs serving at-risk children, seniors, and unemployed adults.

Other accomplishments: Alumni of America Muslim Civic Leadership Institute Leadership Plano and Design School Institute at Stanford.

➤ *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout – Texas Economic Justice Initiatives Panel*

Talia Kahn-Kravis is Manager of Program Innovations and Business Development at Credit Builders Alliance (CBA), where she supports the growth and implementation of CBA's services related to rent reporting, credit building communities, CBA Fund--CBA's emerging intermediary community development financial institution (CDFI), and other new projects. Prior to joining CBA, Talia conducted research on social service agencies seeking to improve services for individuals with low incomes. Before that, she managed the financial education and asset building programs at a CDFI based in Portland, Oregon. Talia has a Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Washington's Evans School of Public Policy and Governance.

➤ *Wednesday, June 19th, Housing Panel - HUD Continuum of Care, Housing Advocacy & Housing Stability Funds*

Mohini Lal is a staff attorney for WomensLaw.org at the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV). She responds to questions from victims of domestic violence nationwide through the Email Hotline and creates and updates content for the website. She graduated from

Chicago-Kent College of Law in 2016 with certificates in Public Interest Law and Praxis. Before joining NNEDV, Mohini was an If/When/How Reproductive Justice Fellow and worked on Asian-American/Pacific Islander women's policy issues at the federal level. She is a first-generation immigrant and is fluent in Hindi.

- *Thursday, June 20th, Panel - Creating and Implementing Economic Policy Change*
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Jessica Marcum Jacobs joined the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence team in 2008. In her current role as the Coalition's Associate Director, Jessica is responsible for numerous activities that support the Coalition's mission to eliminate domestic violence including: working in partnership with Indiana's member programs to support comprehensive programs and services; managing all aspects of the ICADV's state and federal grant awards; and providing training, support, crisis intervention, technical assistance, and systems advocacy on behalf of programs and Hoosier survivors.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout – Leveraging Local Experts to Strengthen your Economic Justice Program*
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Tonya F. McKinley is the FSW Educator/Coach and Residential and Financial Empowerment Coordinator at Safe + Sound Somerset. In 2014, after a twenty-four-year career in the corporate world, Tonya started work on her Social Work degree and became a volunteer legal advocate for domestic violence survivors. Shortly after, Tonya joined the staff of Safe + Sound, becoming the Residential Coordinator in 2017. Tonya and her team applied for the Mary Kay Shelter grant and was awarded \$20,000 in September of 2017, using the funds to create a wellness program. Tonya is currently implementing the new Financial Empowerment Program, hosting the first financial literacy workshop, *From Financial Trauma to Financial Wellness*. Tonya has over 10 years of leadership experience and enjoys mentoring others. In her spare time, she published two mystery novels and enjoys cooking gourmet meals for her loved ones.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout – Providing Inclusive, Holistic Financial Empowerment Services to Marginalized Survivors*
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Holly Melzer has been working as an Economic Empowerment Coach with People's Place for five years. Her business career has spanned over 20 years with AT&T, Lucent Technologies, and Avaya, Inc. Her roles were primarily in sales, marketing and finally product development for Avaya's flagship products. She has a BA in Speech/Theatre Arts from St. Olaf College and a Master's from Krannert Graduate School of Management, Purdue University. Ms. Melzer provides financial coaching and teaches Making Cent\$ – a trauma informed financial empowerment class – to domestic violence survivors, the majority of whom are single mothers. These classes provide step-by-step strategies that help students succeed financially. Over the past five years, Ms. Melzer has taught over 725 students and has developed several partnerships with financial institutions, other non-profit agencies, and community resources. These partnerships have provided additional

financial coaching, legal representation, and incentives to help students further improve their credit and become self-sustaining members of society.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Panel - Credit Unions & Unbanked Immigrants, Establishing Affordable Banking & Banking Partnerships*
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Andrea Mendez is a Bilingual Case Manager for Center for Hope and Safety's Outreach Program. Andrea has worked in the nonprofit world for three years, initially on the issues of immigration and homelessness. For more than a year, Andrea has been on the staff of the Center for Hope and Safety in Bergen County. Beginning as Case Manager working in the Center for Hope and Safety's Emergency Shelter, she was promoted to Outreach Case Manager. Andrea plans to bring new and innovative ideas to enhance the Center for Hope and Safety's financial empowerment program and their overall outreach efforts to spread awareness about domestic violence. She has a Bachelor's degree in psychology, with a minor in community health. Andrea will start her courses in September in pursuit of a dual Master's of Social Work and Juris Doctorate degree.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout – Providing Inclusive, Holistic Financial Empowerment Services to Marginalized Survivors*
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Lisa Pous: Wild Woman falling madly in love with herself. Activist. Advocate. Mother. Healer. Warrior. Student.

Lisa is a self-proclaimed Survivor Extraordinaire and expert at keeping herself alive and reclaiming her personal power. Lisa is the Peer Support Specialist Manager at The SAFE Alliance in Austin, Texas, where she helped to develop and build peer support programming. She now shares her voice and personal story consulting to reach other survivors, raise awareness, and build communities serving survivors. Lisa is a founding member of Survivor Voices Project ATX, as well as a mom, artist, healer, friend, and lover. A proud advocate for human rights, Lisa is known for lifting others up, laughing, and rattling cages.

- *Thursday, June 20th, Breakout Session - Survivor Voices & Compensation*
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Venita Ray is an attorney with a passion for social and racial justice, advocacy and equity. Venita currently serves as the deputy director of the Positive Women's Network-USA, a national membership organization for women living with HIV. Venita served as the public policy manager for Legacy Community Health, a federally qualified health center in Houston, Texas, for four years where she monitored HIV-related health policy and managed an advocacy training program for people living with HIV. Venita advocates and speaks on a number of local and national issues impacting the HIV community and in 2016 led a citywide effort to develop a plan to end the HIV epidemic in Houston. Venita is a founding member of the Texans Living with HIV Network, HIV Racial Justice Now, and the Texas chapter of PWN-USA. Venita was diagnosed with HIV in 2003

and is deeply committed to issues like HIV criminalization, meaningful involvement of people living with HIV, and racial justice.

➤ *Wednesday, June 19th, General Session – Economic Justice: Living in the Margins*

Laura Perez-Boston is the Houston Campaign Manager for Workers Defense Project (WDP). WDP is a membership-based organization that empowers low-income workers to achieve fair employment through education, direct services, organizing and strategic partnerships. Laura has been organizing alongside immigrant Latinx and Black working families for economic and political power in Houston since 2006.

➤ *Wednesday, June 19th, General Session – Economic Justice: Living in the Margins*

Tia Subramanian is the Gender-Based Violence Program Director at the Criterion Institute. Tia oversees the Criterion Institute's global program on identifying ways to use finance as a tool to address gender-based violence. She works with finance practitioners to incorporate an analysis of gender-based violence into financial analysis and decision-making and engages with gender-based violence experts to ensure that any products or strategies finance designs are informed by that expertise. Tia has over a decade's experience in philanthropic strategy, communications, and research, as well as professional and personal experience with a range of women's equity initiatives. She developed an interest in using finance as a tool for social change in her six years at Arabella Advisors, a philanthropic advisory firm, where she helped to found the firm's impact investing practice. At Arabella, she worked with investing and philanthropic strategy experts to design innovative investment vehicles that address systemic barriers to women's access to health care and capital.

Tia is a longtime advocate for women's reproductive justice, currently serving on the board of the DC Abortion Fund. She has a BA in English and Psychology from Amherst College and an MA in English from the University of Virginia.

➤ *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout – Engaging Systems of Finance in Economic Justice*

Mary Trinity is the Associate Director of the New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence (NJCEDV). In this role, Mary manages government grants and contracts, helps to identify community and corporate foundation resources, and oversees data management. She also organizes forums on economic justice, outreach and capacity building efforts, and provides support to the Shelter Coordinator's Forum and the Financial Empowerment Professionals Forum. This year, Mary implemented New Jersey's Allstate Foundation Moving Ahead Grant, working with advocates and community partners around the state to help survivors achieve financial independence. Mary has advocated for survivors for more than 25 years, serving as the Associate

Director of a large domestic violence program in Rhode Island and as a coalition Executive Director in Rhode Island and in New York City prior to joining NJCEDV in 2016.

- *Wednesday, June 19th, Breakout – Leveraging Local Experts to Strengthen your Economic Justice Program*
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Traci Underwood has worked in the movement to end violence against women since 2001. She has been with the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence WSCADV for 12 years and currently coordinates their Economic Justice Project which aims to promote financial security and dignity for survivors by monitoring policy and practice pertaining to public benefits, labor, and housing; collaborating with anti-poverty groups; and supporting the economic stability of survivors through community partnerships and action. She holds a Master's in Social Work from the University of Washington, where she focused on public policy and nonprofit administration.

- *Thursday, June 20th, Panel - Creating and Implementing Economic Policy Change*
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