

*American Library Association Midwinter Meeting; Denver, CO
Saturday, February 10, 2018; 10:30 – 11:30 am*

Project Welcome: Refugee Resettlement Agencies & Libraries

Location: Colorado Convention Center, Rm 404

Project Welcome (<https://publish.illinois.edu/projectwelcome/>) is an IMLS funded project exploring how libraries address the information needs of refugees and asylum seekers in order to support and empower them in their resettlement and integration process. This session will bring together library workers and staff from refugee resettlement agencies to inform the library services continuum that is in development. An optional working group will follow the formal session, offering attendees time to talk about next steps and involvement in the project. This grant is a partnership with the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs and ALA's Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services, and the International Relations Office.



Moderator: Clara M. Chu, Director and Mortenson Distinguished Professor, Mortenson Center for International Library Programs, University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign

Panelists:

- Nicanor Diaz, Immigrant Services Manager, Denver Public Library
- Joseph Wismann-Horther, Integration Partnerships Supervisor, Colorado Refugee Services Program
- Julie Robinson, Refugee & Immigrant Services & Empowerment (RISE) Outreach Manager, Kansas City (MO) Public Library
- George Serwenda, Case Manager, African Community Center in Denver
- Jamie C. Torres, Deputy Director, for the Mayors Agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships (HRCP) and Director, Office of Immigrant & Refugee Affairs, City of Denver

Panelists Bios:

Nicanor Diaz, Immigrant Services Manager, Denver Public Library

Nicanor Diaz is Immigrant Services Manager at the Denver Public Library. He has worked in libraries since 2005, including a 6 month practicum at the Argentinean National Library in Buenos Aires. His duties include overseeing the Plaza program at 10 library branches, a program that serves the immigrant and refugee community across the Denver Metro Area through language conversation tables, citizenship and immigration assistance, and arts and craft. Additionally in this role he manages and supervises 4 branch locations: The Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales branch, the Ross-Barnum Branch, The Smiley Branch, and the Woodbury Branch. He has been an active member of Reforma since 2007, serving as Central Region Chapter Representative and having served as 2015-16 President of the Reforma - Colorado Chapter. His passion to serve immigrants and refugees is due to his childhood experiences growing up in Washington as the child of immigrants, where he often had to serve as a translator for his mother.

Joseph Wismann-Horther, Integration Partnerships Supervisor, Colorado Refugee Services Program

Joseph Wismann-Horther works with Colorado's State Refugee Coordinator in the Department of Human Services (CDHS). As Integration Partnerships Supervisor, Joe works cross sector to establish partnerships. He has an extensive background in nonprofit management, program management and training in diverse cultural settings. What intrigues him most is finding the common threads that bring people together in their efforts to improve their own lives, businesses and communities. Before joining CDHS, Joe served as Chief Operating Officer of the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning. Prior to that he served as the Deputy Director of the United States Peace Corps in the Eastern Caribbean and a Senior Program Director for the Institute for Training and Development. Joe received a M.Ed. in International Education from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, has studied and worked in Spain, Mexico, Paraguay, Morocco, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, St. Lucia, China and Mongolia.

Julie Robinson, Refugee & Immigrant Services & Empowerment (RISE) Outreach Manager, Kansas City (MO) Public Library

Working in a variety of libraries for more than 20 years, Julie Robinson is the Refugee & Immigrant Services & Empowerment (RISE) Outreach Manager for the Kansas City, Missouri Public Library. The position was created in 2014 drawing on her outreach skills and her 11 years of experience with immigrant communities as the manager of KCPL's Irene H. Ruiz Biblioteca de las Americas branch. She continues to develop the Library's services including citizenship and English language learning classes and hosting naturalization ceremonies at the Library. Welcoming new United States citizens is a source of enjoyment and humility for Julie.

Currently, Julie is co-chairing the Public Library Association's Promoting Healthy Communities advisory group and is working with PLA and the Medical Library Association on programming for the MLA conference.

George Serwenda, Case Manager, African Community Center in Denver

Having attempted to flee Burundi multiple times between 1972 and 1993, George Serwenda finally fled to Tanzania in 1993, where he lived as a refugee until he resettled with his family in 2008. George works as a Case Manager at the African Community Center in Denver, the agency that helped settle him and the other speakers. He is now a U.S. citizen.

Jamie C. Torres, Deputy Director, for the Mayors Agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships (HRCP) and Director, Office of Immigrant & Refugee Affairs, City of Denver

Ms. Jamie Torres serves as Deputy Director, for the Mayor's Agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships (HRCP) and Director, Office of Immigrant & Refugee Affairs. In this position Ms. Torres coordinates city-wide immigrant and refugee integration efforts. In addition to staff support to ten (10) Agency Commissions and Advisory Boards promoting collaborative opportunities, she also served as Interim Executive Director for the Mayor's Office of Human Rights and Community Relations.

Ms. Torres is involved in numerous civic organizations, including current Board of Directors with KUVU Radio/Rocky Mountain PBS, Groundwork Denver and most recently served as Board Chair for the Denver Election ACCESO Spanish Language Voter Advisory Board within the Denver Clerk and Records Office.

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Project Welcome was made possible in part by the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) (Planning Grant: LG-82-16-0059-16).