

Strengthening Chicago's Youth (SCY)

Quarterly Meeting

Applying an Anti-racism and Anti-oppression Lens to Violence Prevention
Wednesday, March 1, 2017

Get to Know Our Panelists

Twitter handles listed when available

Kofi Ademola, Activist and Community Organizer

Black Lives Matter Chicago | blacklivesmatterchicago.com | @BLMChicago
blacklivesmatter.com | @Blklivesmatter
kofiademolablmchi@gmail.com | @KofiAdemola

Kofi Ademola is a Pan-African activist, community organizer and leader in the Black Lives Matter movement who has dedicated his life to the struggle for black liberation, and against systematically and intentionally targeted discrimination. At age 18, Kofi started his life long career in social services, working in homeless shelters, advocating for LGBTQIA rights, doing gang intervention and conflict resolution. More recently, Kofi has oriented his work towards combatting racism and ending state violence and criminalization of Black communities, reimagining new egalitarian systems that center the most marginalized.

Movement Description: Black Lives Matter Chicago is an intersectional vehicle that values Black people and our right to self-determination. BLMCHI fights for justice with families most impacted, while working to create just and equitable systems. BLMCHI works to end state violence and criminalization of Black communities by deconstructing white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy.

Jennifer Arwade, Co-Executive Director

Communities United | communitiesunited.org | @CommsUnited
jenny@communitiesunited.org | 773-583-1387 ext. 206

Jenny Arwade is Co-Executive Director of Communities United (formally known as Albany Park Neighborhood Council or APNC), a community based organization located in one of the most immigrant communities in Chicago. A graduate of Princeton University, Jenny has been a community organizer since 2000, and Executive Director Communities United since 2004. In that time, she has worked to organize community residents through local as well as collaborative campaigns to increase access to affordable housing, and affordable health care, improve the quality of public education, and promote immigrant rights. Jenny is also Vice President of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, an Executive Council Member of the United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations, and recently worked with 6 other organizations to form Voices of Youth in Chicago Education (VOYCE), a multi-ethnic youth-led community organizing collaborative to tackle the dropout rate in Chicago Public Schools.

Organization Description: As a grassroots social justice organization, Communities United builds power by developing local leadership and empowering communities to identify and address the root causes of inequity at the neighborhood, city, state and national levels. Communities United believes that community members hold the solutions to the challenges they face. Through a community organizing approach, Communities United develops institutions and community residents as leaders, convenes broad-based coalitions, and unites people across age, race, ethnicity, income, sexual orientation, gender identity, abilities and religion to advance structural change that concretely improves peoples' lives.

Bonsai Bermudez, Executive and Artistic Director

Youth Empowerment Performance Project | wesayyep.com | @WeSayYEPP
bonsai@wesayyep.com | 787-568-7503

Co-Founder and Executive Artistic Director Bonsai Bermúdez completed a Master's Degree in Guidance and Counseling from the University of Puerto Rico with a concentration on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer issues. He has been working in the social justice-service field for over 15 years - focusing on trauma, transformative justice, and harm reduction practices. With a Bachelor's Degree in Theatre and Dance he has worked professionally as a ballet/modern dancer and actor. Bonsai became a part of Ballet Teatro de Puerto Rico, Conservatory of Ballet Concierto, Broadway Dance Center, Traveling Theatre of Puerto Rico, Dallas Black Dance Theatre, among others. He joined to Board of Chicago's Orgullo en Accion in 2010 to politically advocate for the Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Community. He spent five years at the Broadway Youth Center, a Chicago program that serves LGBTQ youth experiencing housing instability, as the Drop-in and Resource Advocacy Manager. He is quadrilingual (Spanish, English, French and Sign Language) with a strong interest in multicultural issues.

Organization Description: The mission of Youth Empowerment Performance Project (YEPP) is to create a safe environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer youth experiencing homelessness to explore their history, investigate new ways to address their struggles and to celebrate their strengths through the process of developing a theatrical performance piece. YEPP uses harm reduction, social justice, transformative justice and education for liberation (theatre of the oppressed and popular education) frameworks to contain and guide the work. Meanwhile YEPP members participate in the program, we support them with resources around housing, employment, educational, legal and health resources, food, transportation, among other basic needs.

Rebecca Ford-Paz, PhD, Psychologist, Center for Childhood Resilience

Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago | luriechildrens.org/ccr | @LurieCCR
RFordPaz@luriechildrens.org | 312-227-8318

Rebecca Ford-Paz, PhD, is a clinical child psychologist who joined the Center for Childhood Resilience in 2014. Her work with the CCR focuses on the reduction of health disparities through increasing access to evidence-based and culturally competent prevention/treatment interventions by building capacity of community-based providers and conducting community-based participatory research. She has a long-standing interest in Latino mental health and has partnered with community agencies to develop culturally responsive trainings on depression/suicide in Latino youth. She also works with community-based agencies to incorporate evidence-based practices and develop an evidence base for culturally relevant interventions developed by community members for underserved youth and families. She is the founding co-chair of the Illinois Childhood Trauma Coalition's Ad-Hoc Committee for Refugee and Immigrant Children and Trauma. Dr. Ford-Paz received a BA and BM from Northwestern University, a Master's degree in Applied Psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a PhD in Clinical Psychology, Child Track, from DePaul University.

Organization Description: The Center for Childhood Resilience (CCR) is a regional organization promoting access to high quality mental health services for children and adolescents statewide through clinical service, research, training, advocacy and policy reform. Housed within one of the nation's top pediatric hospitals, the Center is uniquely positioned to advance innovative and evidence-based strategies and solutions to address comprehensive mental health reform and build a trauma-informed city and state.

Candice Jones, Senior Advisor to Arne Duncan

Emerson Collective | emersoncollective.com | @EmCollective
 candice@emersoncollective.com

Jones currently serves as Senior Advisor to Arne Duncan at the Emerson Collective. There she supports the organizations work on opportunity youth and violence reduction in Chicago. She was appointed Director of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice in 2014 by Democratic Governor Pat Quinn, and confirmed in 2015 by Republican Governor Bruce Rauner, Candice Jones has extensive experience in the field of juvenile justice and at-risk youth. Jones previously served as Associate Director of the Governor's Office of Management and Budget, where she managed the public safety budget and supported the executive team's policy and planning.

She also worked for years, driving juvenile justice strategy in Illinois and nationwide, as a Program Officer at the MacArthur Foundation. Jones served as the Executive Director of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission where she worked to accelerate reform in the State. In 2012, she served as a White House Fellow, one of the country's oldest and most prestigious fellowship programs for leadership and public service. Jones holds a J.D. from New York University School of Law and a Bachelor's degree in African and African-American Studies and Political Science from Washington University in St. Louis.

Organization Description: Emerson Collective is an organization dedicated to removing barriers to opportunity so people can live to their full potential. Established by Laurene Powell Jobs, Emerson Collective centers their work on education, immigration reform, the environment and other social justice initiatives. They use a wide range of tools and strategies—partnering with entrepreneurs and experts, parents and policymakers, advocates and administrators—to spur change and promote equality.

Mecole Jordan, Coordinator, Grassroots Alliance for Police Accountability

United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations (UCCRO) | unitedcongress.org | @UCCRO
 mjordan@unitedcongress.org | 773-599-3624

Mecole Jordan graduated from Western Illinois University with a BA in Organizational Communication and Masters of Science degree in Human Resource Management at Capella University. She began her non-profit career volunteering for Target Area Development in 2006-2012 starting with the SMART Act campaign to reduce the criminalization of individuals with drug addiction. She also provided direct oversight for Community Support Advisory Council (CSAC), an IDOC reentry program providing comprehensive wraparound support for the formerly incarcerated and violence prevention programs such as Ceasefire Auburn Gresham. Mecole assisted with grant writing, website design and development, building organizational structure, developing and executing the new hire orientation and training for Target Area's Safe Passage program. Finally, she conducted trainings and executive administrative support for the Statewide Action and Grassroots Education Initiative (SAGE), building relationships and engaging community organizations and parents in Chicago, Oak Lawn, Rockford, Decatur, Springfield, and Bloomington Illinois. Mecole began working UCCRO's work in 2010 as a member the advocacy team and trainer for our Racial Equity Curriculum. She aided in the development and execution of UCCRO conventions and annual retreats. In 2013, Mecole worked part-time with UCCRO as the coordinator of the Equal Voice Membership Campaign. In 2015, Mecole organized nearly 800 Illinois Early Intervention providers and parents around the State budget, bringing attention vulnerable infants and toddlers losing needed therapies during the budget impasse. Mecole currently lives in the south suburbs with her 3-year-old daughter, Micaela Grace.

Organization Description: The United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations (UCCRO) is a grassroots-led multiethnic and multi-faith human rights alliance mobilizing people, policy and ideals to drive societal transformation and forge unity for the equitable advancement of marginalized communities. UCCRO believes that all Illinoisans have the right to be healthy, wealthy, safe, educated and employed regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, age, income or citizenship status.