

## Equity in Emergency Management Panel

Portland State University  
January 29, 2019

*What does equity mean? How can it be measured? How are FEMA-funded initiatives affecting the creation of inclusionary programs and responses? What are Neighborhood Emergency Teams currently doing to address equity concerns?*

These are examples of questions that were addressed at a panel discussion held at Portland State University on January 29. The topic at hand, “Equity in Emergency Management,” and the panel discussion that ensued were the culmination of an independent study that PSU Master’s of Urban and Regional Planning graduate students **Jaye Cromwell** and **Sabina Roan** started in the spring of 2018. “We found that emergency management was a topic that wasn’t being addressed [in our program],” said Cromwell, who is currently also serving as an Equity Planning Intern at Multnomah County Office of Emergency Management. The panel event was hosted by the Institute of Metropolitan Studies to kick off their winter publication of Metroscape magazine.

The panelists included **Dr. Masami Nishishiba**, Department Chair and Associate Professor of Public Administration at the Mark O. Hatfield School of Government, PSU; **Justin E. Ross**, Community Capacity Specialist and Public Information Officer at Multnomah County Office of Emergency Management; **Cynthia Valdivia**, Senior Bilingual Communication and Education Specialist and Medical Reserve Corps Unit Coordinator, Washington County; and **Da’Von Wilson-Angel**, Neighborhood Emergency Team (NET) Program Specialist, Portland Bureau of Emergency Management. Each had their own unique perspective and experience to bring to the table, both personally and professionally.

While the field of Emergency Management on a whole still has many gaps to fill when it comes to addressing equity and systematic disparity, positive steps forward were acknowledged, from open conversations taking place to mentality shifts and the re-thinking of traditional approaches to emergency preparedness, planning, response, and recovery and their effects on underserved populations.

Throughout the discussion non-profit organizations continued to be recognized as critical boots-on-the-ground partners in reaching communities and finding out what particular populations need. Another prevailing theme was communal and individual empowerment. A sense of empowerment, as well as mental resilience, when going into a disaster can significantly help support how well a community fairs. Contributing to emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts can help communities build and sustain an atmosphere of empowerment.

The panel discussion was recorded, and the video will be available at a later date.

### Where to go from here:

The next Neighborhood Emergency Team (NET) training starts March 9th. Visit [this site](#) for more details.

The State of Oregon will be holding an inclusive Emergency Management Conference on June 18th. Reach out to Justin Ross ([justin.ross@multco.us](mailto:justin.ross@multco.us)) for more information.

[Listos!](#): Washington County offers the state's only emergency preparedness class in Spanish. This workshop is broken down into four 3-hour trainings held once a week. Participants earn their certification in First Aid and CPR. Contact Cynthia Valdivia ([cynthia\\_valdivia@co.washington.or.us](mailto:cynthia_valdivia@co.washington.or.us)) with questions.

Multnomah County Emergency Management developed tools to help the emergency management community integrate equity into all programs and services. These tools are available in Microsoft Word format so they can be replicated and modified by anyone interested in infusing equity into their emergency management program. Visit [this website](#) to access these tools.

Visit [this site](#) to see Jaye Cromwell and Sabina Roan's research and to find local resources.