

June 2022 Happy Immigrant Heritage Month

June is Immigrant Heritage Month, a time to celebrate our diversity and the many contributions immigrants make in our communities and to America. It's an opportunity to lift immigrant stories of bravery and resilience so we can work towards building a humane and just world.

Think about a person in your life who came to America with big dreams of a better life for their family.

Is it your parents, a family member, neighbor, or coworker, or is it you?

As an immigrant born and raised in the Philippines, moving to the United States as a teenager was an experience full of both challenges and new opportunities. My mother struggled to come to the U.S to provide a better life for my family and me, from holding a tourist visa to an expired visa, to becoming undocumented, to sponsorship, and then, finally, to citizenship. I may share similar immigrant stories with some of you. But even the immigrant experience is itself varied and diverse.

Many immigrants are here legally; some live in the shadows; others have been deported or kept from joining their families in the United States or live-in fear of being separated. Other immigrants have lived here in the U.S for decades; they have families with U.S. citizens; they work for the State; they own businesses; they go to college; they have jobs and pay taxes. But as we know, many of these individuals still battle extremely harsh laws that can result in permanent exile and separation from their families. These stresses are often combined with the process of building a life and career in the United States, itself no easy task, but one where immigrants start with significant barriers.

My personal and professional goal is to push for us to continue to advocate for laws and policies that protect human rights, support immigrant communities, foster empathy, and build a more inclusive society. This year, we did this by sharing stories of immigrants and refugees. I took on the role of the Chair for the Washington Immigrant Network for the fiscal year 2021-2022 with the support of my agency, the Department of Enterprise Services, and my leaders, Trisha Cronin, Pat Seigler, Wendy Endress, Cindy Guertin-Anderson, and our Director, Tara Smith, and my Leadership Development Team. A shout out to my mentor, Kendrick Stewart, Deputy Director at the Department of Commerce.

I worked in partnership with a fantastic team of 18 state employees who also volunteered their time to help expand opportunities for immigrants who are current and future employees within the Washington state government. The team also helped provide resources for all immigrants who are state employees to connect, share, and educate each other and Washington state agencies on the skills, expertise, and cultural value of a diverse workforce.

As a BRG, we hosted a series of events for our members and allies this year; thank you, [WIN Team!](#)

- 2 Solidarity Gatherings for our Afghan / Ukrainian Communities
- 3 Lunch and Learn Sessions (Asian Heritage Month, Civic Engagement Case Study, and Destigmatizing Mental Health in the workplace)
- 5 Public Speaking Group Sessions
- 1 Resume Workshop and Roundtable Discussions
- 10 General Monthly Membership meetings

- 10 Immigrant stories from 10 countries at our membership meetings
- 4 Quarterly Meet & Greet
- 20 Newsletters Issues
- At least over a dozen WIN presentations & membership outreach activities throughout the year
- WIN Annual Celebration
- Posted several hundred job postings through our social media

About WIN Membership:

- We have members from several agencies, averaging 50-60 participants/members at our monthly meetings.
- 317 LinkedIn connections
- We've also reached almost 2,500 newsletter subscribers

Special Thanks to:

Thank you, Lorraine Lee, our executive sponsor, for supporting our efforts throughout the year!

Special thanks to Julie Campos for stepping into the Vice-Chair role in the year's second half and being our secretary for the first part of the year.

I also want to thank our members, allies, other BRGs, and partner agencies for supporting Washington Immigrant Network this year. I also want to thank our partners at OFM for supporting WIN efforts throughout the year and Dr. J and the team at the Equity Office.

Thank you to the Project Lead team for putting this wonderful WIN Annual Celebration together – Larry Delgado, Philip Muirhead, Gwen Willis, Sanyu Tushabe, Anu Rao, Amel Alsalman, and Julie Campos. Finally, thank you, Colin Helsley and Elia Mendoza, for leading our newsletter & social media.

I am excited to support the new Executive Leadership team as past Chair. This year has been an incredible learning experience serving as Chair and working alongside my team and our members.

I want to leave you with this quote from Pramila Jayapal, Congresswoman.

"I am not a woman on Monday, an immigrant on Tuesday, a worker on Wednesday, and a mom on Thursday. I am all of those things all of the time, and I am going to fight for all of those things all of the time."

It has been an honor to be on this journey with you all. Thank you again for the opportunity.

Sincerely,



Joanne Lee (she/her), WIN Chair (2021-2022)