

# Meet the Panelists



## Josephine Garnem

Josephine Garnem is the Program Manager for the Gilchrist Immigrant Resources Center for the East County region. Josephine was born in Sierra Leone and has lived in the Middle East, Uganda, Pakistan and Afghanistan before moving to the USA. She is an experienced community mobilizer and humanitarian professional, with over 20 years of global experience in many places including Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, and in the USA. Her passion is to strengthen links between communities through partnerships, in order to improve their health and wellbeing. She joined the Gilchrist team from the

international non-profit sector where she has served as the Strategic Outreach and Partnership Coordinator for International Medical Corps, an international humanitarian organization.

## Mohamed Abubakr

Mohamed Abubakr is a Sudanese human rights activist and peacemaker with a decade and a half of civil society experience. Since high school, he has founded and led organizations and initiatives focused on humanitarian, human rights, youth empowerment and peace programs across the Middle East and Africa (MEA) including in Darfur, South Sudan, Sudan, Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian Territories and beyond. Mohamed has also documented, reported and mobilized against human rights abuses across MEA, and since arriving in the United States has become a sought after voice at the State Department and in Congress concerning policy and human rights issues in the region.



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## Yi Shen

For almost a decade, Yi Shen has accumulated knowledge and insight from his career in all levels of Maryland's government. He wants to use the experiences gained to assist and support the Asian community in Montgomery County. Yi served four years in Governor Martin O'Malley's administration as the Director of the Governor's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (GCAPA) and the Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs (GCSAA). Afterwards, Yi continued his career in public service as a Constituent Service Representative in the Office of Senator Chris Van Hollen. For the past three years, Yi worked as a Senior Legislative Aide in the Office of Councilmember Sidney Katz.

## Luz Chavez Gonzales Moderator

Luz Chavez Gonzales is an MCPS and Montgomery College alum, and National Dream.US Scholar at Trinity Washington University. She currently serves as a Field Organizer for United We Dream, the nation's largest immigrant and youth led network.

Born in La Paz, Bolivia, Luz immigrated to the United States at the age of 4. It wasn't until her junior year of high school while she was applying for colleges when she found out about her undocumented status. Since then she advocated and joined social justice movements.

After the Trump Administration rescinded DACA in 2017, Luz joined the office takeovers for the Clean Dream Act and the Live Unafraid Campaign for United We Dream. She engaged in local fights in Gaithersburg, MD and Frederick County, MD. Leading a victory to a Freedom City resolution in Gaithersburg. She was a spokesperson for the Dream and Promise Act, volunteered with the Defund Hate Coalition, #ICEoutofDC, and mobilized youth for the #HomelsHere walkouts for the DACA Supreme Court hearing. Luz has been advocating for racial justice for Black Lives, COVID-19 protections for the immigrant community, as well as leading a cohort of youth from across the country to become community organizers in a summer program.



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