Introducing our speakers

Andrea Johnson is Senior Counsel for State Policy at the National Women’s Law Center. In that role, she coordinates efforts to advance state policies across NWLC’s workplace justice, income security, education, and reproductive rights and health teams, while working directly on legislation and litigation related to pay discrimination, sexual harassment, pregnancy discrimination, and unfair scheduling practices. Before joining the center, Andrea was a law clerk for the Honorable Colleen Kollar-Kotelly on the United States District Court for the District of Columbia and the Honorable Eric T. Washington, Chief Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. Andrea served as a Legislative Aide for Congresswoman Betty McCollum from Minnesota before attending law school. She received a law degree from Columbia Law School and a bachelor’s degree in Political Science and French from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Ramya Sekaran is a Justice Catalyst Fellow at the National Women’s Law Center, where she is engaged in advocacy to prevent and address harassment in the workplace, through state and federal policy advocacy and public education. Ramya is a graduate of the Georgetown University Law Center, where she was a Public Interest Law Scholar. At Georgetown, Ramya served as a student attorney in the Civil Rights Clinic. She litigated a Title IX case on behalf of a student survivor of dating violence and co-wrote a petition for writ of certiorari to the U.S. Supreme Court in an employment discrimination matter. Additionally, Ramya represented a detained asylum seeker in removal proceedings as a student in the Center for Applied Legal Studies clinical program. She has also completed internships with the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Housing and Civil Enforcement, the law firm Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Racial Justice Program, and the Center for Reproductive Rights. Before law school, Ramya worked at the ACLU Women’s Rights Project and at a human rights NGO in Tamil Nadu, India.
Rhodes Perry, MPA, believes in the power of authenticity at work. He puts this belief into practice by helping business leaders, change agents, and visionaries at all levels cultivate workplace cultures of belonging through his leadership and management consulting firm. He is an award-winning social entrepreneur, best-selling author, and sought-after speaker. Nationally recognized as a LGBTQ thought leader, he has two decades of government and nonprofit experience having worked at the White House, PFLAG National, and the City of New York. Media outlets such as Forbes, The Wall Street Journal, and the Associated Press have featured his powerful work as a diversity, equity, and inclusion subject matter expert.

Rhodes also hosts a weekly podcast, The Out Entrepreneur, which has empowered more than 35,000 LGBTQ and ally entrepreneurs to pursue their professional passions and build the businesses of their dreams. Rhodes earned a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Gender Studies from the University of Notre Dame, and a Master of Public Administration from New York University. He spends his free time bicycling worldwide, hanging out with his family in Portland, Oregon, and serves on the Portland Human Rights Commission, the Portland Area Business Association’s Board, and the National Diversity Board for Studies Weekly.

Rhodes Perry Consulting, LLC (RPC) supports leaders, visionaries, and change agents to cultivate workplace cultures of belonging. The firm’s primary practice areas include executive coaching, leadership development, strategic planning, capacity building, and change management solutions to improve the social, environment, and economic performance of government agencies, corporations, and nonprofit organizations. RPC offers an intersectional approach to implementing and sustaining organizational change with a demonstrated record of success, commitment, and passion.

Dr. Shweta Moorthy is the Research Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC), an alliance of 19 culturally specific organizations working towards racial justice in Oregon. She joined the CCC in 2016 after a faculty position at Northern Illinois University where she conducted research on forced migration. Shweta has more than 10 years of research experience, with a significant proportion of that time spent in developing and implementing a research justice vision that is compatible with and moves towards achieving social justice transformation. She brings high-level quantitative research skills and a
strong racial equity analysis to any conversation. Being an immigrant woman of color, she considers it vital to have a transnational lens to understand and participate in local social justice spaces. Shweta earned her master’s degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University, India, and her doctorate from University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Kheoshi Owens is a Master Facilitator and Founder of Empress Rules. Empress Rules promotes economic empowerment for people affected by current and historical inequities by working with organizations to create inclusive environments. Kheoshi holds an Master of Business Administration from DeVry University and a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice from Portland State University. Kheoshi has worked with people impacted by current and historical inequities for close to 20 years. She attended Courageous Conversations About Race, Teaching with Purpose, Dismantling Racism, and numerous additional equity training in Portland and abroad.

During her professional career, Kheoshi worked with thousands of students, hundreds of teachers, and numerous organizations in Portland and beyond. Under her leadership, Kheoshi worked with teachers to successfully close the racial achievement gap between white students and students of color. Through creating inclusive environments, Kheoshi empowered her staff to transform the Roosevelt Step Up program from 60 percent underserved youth on track to graduate, to more than 97 percent on track to graduate.

Kheoshi became the Lead Equity Facilitator for Roosevelt High School and a primary resource for adults who wanted to create inclusive environments. She successfully matched 270 youth with mentors in the community and was awarded the Portland Community College Diamond Alumni Award for displaying excellence in the community.

Empress Rules is a current member of the Council for Economic and Racial Equity for Prosper Portland and has provided services for numerous organizations, including Open School NW, NAACP, Energy Trust of Oregon, Portland Public School District, Global Works Community Fund, Portland Children’s Levy, DAART, International Association for Public Participation.
Daniel López-Cevallos, Ph.D., MPH, is an Associate Professor of Latina/o/x Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Health Equity at Oregon State University (OSU). Before OSU, he was Assistant Professor of Community Health at Western Oregon University (2008 – 2012). His research and evaluation work focuses on the intersections of race/ethnicity, gender, class, and other socioeconomic and sociocultural constructs, and their relationship to health and health care issues. He is interested in the development and implementation of community, institutional, and policy-level strategies to better serve Latinx and other marginalized communities. Over the past decade, he has served as health equity consultant with local, regional, and state-level organizations in Oregon. He earned his Ph.D. in Public Health, with concentrations in International Health and Health Policy, at OSU, and his Master of Public Health and Bachelor of Science degrees from Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador.

Dr. Markisha Smith is the new Director for the Bureau of Equity and Human Rights at the City of Portland. She previously served as Director for the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at the Oregon Department of Education. Her work is specifically focused on best practice in equity, diversity, and inclusion, culturally responsive practice, and closing opportunity/access/belief gaps for historically and currently marginalized groups across the state. Her previous experience includes working as the Director of Undergraduate Teacher Education at Warner Pacific College, as an Assistant Professor at Western Oregon University and Northern Michigan University, and as a high school English teacher in Houston for nine years. She is a proud mother of two beautiful children, Cadence and Bryson.

Jessica Raven is a mother, community organizer, and educator working to prevent gendered violence by using community-based solutions, such as art, education, and research. From 2015 to 2018, she served as the Executive Director of Washington, D.C.- based grassroots organization Collective Action for Safe Spaces (CASS). In her role at CASS, she spearheaded advocacy to develop comprehensive, noncriminal policy solutions to street harassment, defined for the first time in U.S. law to include all forms of sexual, gendered, and identity-based harassment. In 2018, she ran for office in a controversial hyper-local election for PTA President at her child’s elementary school.
Krystal Atha is a multi-passionate entrepreneur fueled by social justice and her mission to help leaders improve their organizations’ capacity and individual competencies. When she is not facilitating workshops or implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizations, she is reading nonfiction, tending to her many plant babies, and enjoying live music. She is currently building tools and resources for inclusive leadership training. You can reach her at Krystal@sembramos.org or on Twitter: @Atha01.

John Ahlen has studied conflict and dispute resolution at the University of Oregon law school, and was the first graduate in a newly created program focused on alternative dispute resolution. He has served as a Chief Steward for Service Employees International Union, representing the interests of workers in discrimination and disability rights cases, while training and leading a team of stewards to do the same.

He currently serves as the accessibility specialist for Lane Transit District, which is the main point of contact for accessibility questions, concerns, and complaints; reasonable modification requests; and LTD’s policies and procedures for service animals. He is currently leading a service animal pilot program, a grant-funded joint project between the Federal Transit Association and Lane Transit District intended to create expedited options for individuals boarding with service animals. He is looking forward to discussing both the bright lines and grey areas when it comes to addressing service animal questions.

Heidi von Ravensberg graduated from the University of Oregon School of Law in 1994. She joined the Oregon State Bar in 1995 after completing her Master of Business Administration. She is a long-time member of the bar’s Disability Law Section and has served as its chairperson three times. After graduating, she practiced law for a few years before joining the faculty at the University of Oregon in 2000 where she has dual appointments in the College of Education and the School of Law. Since 2008, she has taught the Disability Law class, which surveys nondiscrimination law from a disability rights perspective. She coordinates the UO Interdisciplinary Disability Research Council, a partnership between the UO Center on Human Development and faculty to advance disability research. She is a Senior Research Associate for the Educational and Community Supports research unit.
She has been blind since youth when she was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa and Macular Degeneration. Since 1982, she has been partnered with five dogs from Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc., a leader in the training of guide dogs for more than 75 years. Her guide dogs have accompanied her to a wide range of places. She will share her experience and her knowledge of the law on the subjects of bringing animals into public and private spaces and how to respond when people attempt to bring animals that are not really service animals.

Dominic López is a life-long Oregonian and a long-time supporter of LGBTQ justice. He had his political awakening in 2004 when Oregon passed Measure 36, writing same-sex marriage discrimination into the state constitution. He has since volunteered, interned, and staffed across the region fighting for equality for marginalized people. He draws his passion for working with volunteers and community members from his role as an Organizer with both Oregon and Washington’s marriage equality campaigns, as the Metro Regional Organizer with Measure 91 in 2014, and a number of candidate campaigns throughout. He is a gamer, a multiracial man, and a proud ally of the LGBTQ movement. He is the Organizing and Education Manager for Basic Rights Oregon. (Pronouns: He/Him)

Kieran Chase is a rural Midwestern transplant who is thrilled to now call Oregon home. As a teenager, Kieran leapt feet-first into the LGBTQ movement, working as an organizer for the campaign to legalize same-sex marriage in Maine. Kieran continued this work in their early twenties, organizing in Rhode Island, Maryland, and Oregon. In fall 2013, Kieran settled at Reed College in Portland. While at Reed, Kieran was a dedicated advocate for the needs of transgender and gender-nonconforming students. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in linguistics in 2017, Kieran began working with BRO to continue to advocate for transgender Oregonians. As a trans person from an isolated part of the country, Kieran is particularly passionate about building strong, powerful communities to support transgender people living in rural areas. Kieran spends their spare time outside as much as possible, particularly gardening and hiking. When forced inside, they can most often be found listening to an audiobook while piecing together a quilt. Kieran is the Transgender Justice Program Manager for Basic Rights Oregon. (Pronouns: they/them)
Ian Jaquiss is the Interim ADA Coordinator at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU). As the ADA Coordinator, Ian works across OHSU addressing issues related to making the enterprise more accessible for people with disability. Ian also conducts trainings designed to help foster a climate of greater inclusion for people with disabilities. Since joining OHSU in the summer of 2014, he has conducted more than 300 trainings, reaching more than 3,500 people.

Ian came to OHSU from the Portland Trail Blazers, where he was the Director of Community Programs. During his seven years with the Trail Blazers, he facilitated and engaged the team’s players with community outreach activities and events. Before joining the Trail Blazers, he was the Executive Director of Oregon Disability Sports, a nonprofit organization that promotes sports for people with physical disabilities.

Ian attended the University of Southern California, where he became the first person with a traumatic spinal cord injury to swim for an NCAA Division I team. As a swimmer, Ian was on the 1984 and 1988 U.S. Paralympic Teams, winning two bronze medals in 1984 and two gold medals in 1988. After retiring his goggles, he worked for the Los Angeles Times’ sports department. He then attended law school at Cumberland School of Law in Birmingham, Alabama, where he met his wife. They graduated, married, and later moved to Oregon; and are now proud yet exhausted parents of an ever-growing daughter and three pets.

Ian acquired his spinal cord injury when he was hit by a car at the age of 2. He has a lifetime of experiences in navigating the world as a person with a disability. He uses experiences to conduct trainings for OHSU employees to improve services for people with disabilities and to conduct community outreach with people with disabilities to enhance their engagement with OHSU. He has a juris doctorate and a degree in English.

Joseph Tam is a Training and Development Specialist with the Technical Assistance for Employers Program and a former Senior Civil Rights Investigator with the Civil Rights Division of the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries. He has been working for the agency for about 35 years. He is a graduate of Ricks College (Rexburg, Idaho) and Portland State University. He conducts seminars on Workplace Accommodation, Drug and Alcohol Issues in the Workplace, Disability Laws, Injured Workers Laws, Dealing with Difficult Employees, federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Oregon Family Leave Act (OFLA), Oregon Sick
Steve Lee has more than 30 years advancing equity through public policy, helping public officials improve governance, assisting leaders to create effective organizations, and supporting communities to build better places to live, learn, work, and play. His policy experience focuses on workforce equity, urban development, environmental justice, and conflict resolution.

Steve most recently served as the Director of Equity Integration at Seattle City Light and before that, he was the Senior Policy Advisor to the Seattle Mayor. A Portland native, Steve began his career in the Oregon Legislature. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from the University of the District of Columbia and Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree from The George Washington University.

Shilo George, MS (she/her) is Southern Cheyenne-Arapaho and Scottish international speaker, trainer, and owner of Łush Kumtux Tumtum Consulting, which means “a great awakening of the heart and spirit” in the Chinuk Wawa trade language. Shilo interweaves cultural traditions and spirituality with an anti-oppressive and decolonizing lenses to promote healing and empowerment in herself and others in the communities she is a part of. Her workshops and presentations explore the intersections of race, sexuality, body size, and trauma (both individual and inter-generational). Shilo trains others on systems of oppression, trauma informed care, and proactive ways that businesses and organizations can create policies and environments that that promote inclusion, diversity, and healing.

She received her Bachelor of Science in Art Practices in 2012 and a Master of Science in Educational Leadership and Policy with a specialization in Postsecondary Adult and Continuing Education in 2017, both from Portland State University.
Wilma Marchbanks, Transformational Leader, Racial Equity Educator, Co-founder of Equity Asks, CADC2
Wilma brings a torch of love to DEI and social justice initiatives, inviting people to step in and speak up, revealing what’s previously been hidden and ignored. She embodies and teaches the power of transparent truth telling in courageous spaces and catalyzes profound connection that sustains transformation. Wilma brings a deep understanding of systemic and institutional racism and oppression, as well as her lived experience, to every conversation. Her leadership presence moves groups and communities towards a realized equity that serves as an essential foundation for individual and organizational flourishing. Her work is informed by her studies in racial justice, her ancestors, and her mentors Audre Lorde, Martin Luther King Jr., Angela Davis, and Rev. angel Kyodo Williams.

Anakha Coman, Leadership and Culture Development Specialist, Co-founder of Equity Asks
Anakha brings her wisdom, depth, and understanding of cultural and systemic behavioral change to conversations about race, gender, and class. She is known for issuing a clarion call to organizations and communities – requesting brave and swift collective responses that move us from operating from a fear-based consciousness that upholds systems of oppression to a love-based consciousness that give rise to systems of liberation where we flourish together. Her unflinching personal and professional look at inequities and biases as well, as her understanding of the seemingly small actions that catalyze profound and sustainable change, inspire and motivate people. She’s worked with organizations, including The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Intel, Nike, Microsoft, Eli Lilly, and Zappos.

Som Subedi was born in Bhutan, raised in a refugee camp in Nepal without a hope of life and future for almost two decades, and came to America in 2008 with $10 and a plastic bag. Som has been interviewed by National Public Radio, Oregon Public Broadcasting, The Oregonian, Los Angeles Times, Al Jazeera America, Huffington Post, Axios, and many more local, national, and international media. Som is a refugee, an American, and proud receiver of local and national awards for advocating for refugees and immigrants. Som gives back to the community via a public agency as an Engagement Coordinator.