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## **Centering Black Diaspora Voices at NIIC 2020**

WASHINGTON – In a year in which America has confronted and wrestled with its racist past and continuing racial inequality, the experience and perspectives of Black immigrants and refugees will be front and center at the [National Immigrant Integration Conference 2020— New American Dreams](#), to be held [Dec. 8-9](#).

Taking place after four years of community-destroying strategies targeting immigrants and refugees of all backgrounds - Black and Brown communities in particular - and on the heels of the election of a new administration and Congress, discussions at the NIIC 2020 will focus on eliminating systemic inequities, and building the solidarity needed across immigrant, refugee and other communities to find long-term solutions that will redress and repair.

In collaboration with the National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA), the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI), will host the first-ever [Black Virtual NIIC](#), centering the Black immigrant experience as part of the fully online [NIIC 2020](#). BAJI is the first organization focused on the Black immigrant experience to serve as a National Partner for NIIC, the nation’s largest annual gathering of groups working on behalf of immigrants and refugees.

“Black immigrants are still too often omitted from the narrative about immigrants and refugees in the United States. Our issues are both similar to and distinct from those of non-Black immigrants and refugees, but our voices are not at the table,” said *Nana Gyamfi, executive director of BAJI*. “Black NIIC is an opportunity for us to come together as a Black immigrant community; uplift our experiences,

perspectives, concerns and expertise; celebrate our connections; and make our collective voices heard more broadly across the immigrant and refugee sector.”

Black NIIC will consist of both public and invitation-only sessions, including a mainstage conversation on Black immigrant issues - *Black Resistance & Resilience: Beyond Solidarity* - on NIIC’s opening day of Dec. 8. The insights, leadership and vision of Black immigrants will be featured across the NIIC in sessions including those on the election outcomes, the economy, healthcare, refugee issues, and racial justice efforts.

**Among the Black immigrant leaders who will be featured speakers at NIIC are:**

- **Nana Gyamfi** is the executive director of Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI), the oldest and largest Black-led social justice organization representing the nearly 10 million Black immigrants, refugees, and families living in the United States. A movement attorney for the past 25 years, Gyamfi is the co-founder of Justice Warriors 4 Black Lives and Human Rights Advocacy, both dedicated to fighting for human rights and Black liberation. She has served as the executive director of Black Women’s Forum, an organization co-founded by Congresswoman Maxine Waters. Gyamfi is a former professor in the Pan-African Studies Department at California State University Los Angeles.
- **Rosa Gomez-Herrin** leads Innovation and Strategic Partnerships at Operation Restoration (OR). She is an immigrant from Lima, Peru, who has spent most of her adult life in the Deep South of the United States. Gomez-Herrin joined OR to pursue her dream of ending mass incarceration and immigrant detention by supporting the leadership of those directly impacted by these unjust systems. She is an activist, scholar and urban planner with almost 20 years of experience working for systemic change while addressing complex social issues including immigrants’ rights, workforce development, workers’ rights, affordable housing, equitable disaster recovery, and sustainable development. Her personal, academic and professional experiences are rooted in a life-long commitment to social and racial justice. Gomez-Herrin has extensive experience working in Peru, Mississippi, Louisiana and the U.S. Gulf Coast as an advocate, grantmaker and organizer focusing on improving social and civic accessibility for historically disenfranchised communities. She is a founding member of the Baton Rouge Immigrants’ Rights Coalition, and was recently selected to the Lideres Fellowship with Hispanics in Philanthropy.
- **Kayse Jama**, executive director of Unite Oregon, was born into a nomad family in Somalia. Jama left Somalia when the civil war erupted, and found sanctuary in Portland, Oregon. From 2005 to 2007, he trained immigrant and refugee community leaders in five Western states - Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Utah, and Idaho - under the prestigious New Voices Fellowship at Western States Center. Jama has been awarded the Skidmore Prize for outstanding young nonprofit professionals (2007), the Oregon Immigrant Achievement Award from the Oregon chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (2008), the 2009 Lowenstein Trust Award, which is presented yearly to “that person who demonstrated the greatest contribution to assisting the poor and underprivileged in Portland,” and the 2012 Portland Peace Prize.
- **Mustafa Jumale** is the political director at Voice for Refugee, an organization that works to advance pro-refugee policies at the national, state, and local levels; hold elected leaders

accountable; and support the election of pro-refugee candidates at all levels of government. Previously the policy manager at the BAJI, Jumale is one of the co-founders of the Black Immigrant Collective, and is the co-founder of Khyre Solutions LLC. He has led work on various policy issues including remittance issues in Somalia, human rights, education, female genital cutting, and immigration.

- **Laura Martin** is the executive director of the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN) and PLAN Action, a statewide organization founded by Nevada activists in 1994 to improve the lives of marginalized communities by promoting leadership, social justice, and fairness.
- **Kica Matos** is the vice president of initiatives at the Vera Institute of Justice. Matos joined the Vera Institute in 2019 as the director of the Center on Immigration and Justice. She previously served as the director of Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice at the Center for Community Change, an organization with the mission to empower the people most affected by injustice to lead movements to improve the policies that affect their lives. Matos has been a national advocate for immigration reform, and coordinated the work of the Fair Immigration Reform Movement, the nation's largest network of immigrant rights organizations. She has extensive experience as an advocate, community organizer, and lawyer.
- **Ola Osifo Osaze** is a trans masculine queer of Edo and Yoruba descent, who was born in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, and now resides in Houston, Texas. Osaze is the national organizer for the Black LGBTQ+ Migrant Project. A community organizer for many years, Osaze has worked with Transgender Law Center, the Audre Lorde Project, Uhuru Wazobia (one of the first LGBT groups for African immigrants in the U.S.), Queers for Economic Justice, and Sylvia Rivera Law Project. Osaze is a 2015 Voices of Our Nation Arts workshop fellow, and has writings published in Apogee, Qzine, Black Girl Dangerous, Black Looks, and the anthologies *Queer African Reader* and *Queer Africa II*.

The December virtual NIIC 2020 gathering kicks off at 12 p.m. ET on Tuesday, Dec. 8, and is expected to draw more than 5,000 attendees from diverse backgrounds across the nation. To ensure the event reaches the broadest possible audience, tickets to attend the entire virtual NIIC cost just \$15.

**To register, visit the NIIC 2020 website [here](#). Find more details on the NIIC schedule and program [here](#). For information on the two-day invitation-only Black Virtual NIIC for Black and African Diaspora leaders hosted by BAJI, [see here](#).**

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*The [National Partnership for New Americans \(NPNA\)](#) is a national multiethnic, multiracial organization that represents 41 of the largest regional immigrant and refugee rights organizations in 37 states. Its members provide large-scale services for the communities, to leverage their collective power and expertise for a national strategy. More information about the New American Voters 2020 campaign is available at <http://newamericanvoters2020.org/>.*



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