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## JCIRA General Meeting

**Thursday, January 20th**

**5:00pm to 6:30pm (Pacific Standard Time)**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89742421355?pwd=TUkwS2FKUGRFbHN2OEZRQVpmdk5FUT09>

Meeting ID: 897 4242 1355

Passcode: JCIRA

- **5:00pm JCIRA Team Reports including Sponsorship Circles & Conversation Café**
- **5:45 pm Featured speaker will be Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, who is a Presbyterian minister along with her husband in a small-town church in New York, which recently started hosting**

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fellowship from Ghana that now has their own church. She will speak about the process of hosting a family and share their individual stories. (See related article below on [sponsorship circles](#).)

## HELP Through **SPONSORSHIP CIRCLES!!**

Afghan evacuees are being held in U.S. military bases and need people or groups to be their sponsors in order to be released. Our government has created the Sponsorship Circle program to promote and facilitate this process. JCIRA is studying the possibility of forming a Sponsorship Circle.

To make this happen, we will need volunteers, including a few to be the primary contacts for the Afghans we welcome into our community. These few will need to commit to spending substantial hours each week in direct contact with the person or family we sponsor. They will need to be the newcomers best friends. A greater number of volunteers will provide more focused assistance. For example donations of household goods, providing a ride, help with applying for a benefit or a drivers license, taking our new friend(s) to see a sight or attend an event, guiding them on a shopping trip, and so on. If you are interested, contact Larry Jensen at [lpjensen15@gmail.com](mailto:lpjensen15@gmail.com).

There will also be a need for money. We don't yet have an idea of just how much. We are required to provide an initial amount of \$2275 per person or \$9100 for a family of four, but we know much more will be needed. If we do go ahead with this project we will have some sort of campaign to solicit funds. If you know that you will contribute, it would be helpful in our planning to know that. To pledge a future donation, email Jean Walat at [jmwalat@gmail.com](mailto:jmwalat@gmail.com).

A number of JCIRA members have been involved with refugee resettlement or sponsorship of asylum seekers in the past. All report that it was a rewarding and satisfying experience. If you are involved in whatever capacity is comfortable for you, you will not regret it.



Photo credit The Stranger

## Background

We remember the frenzied evacuation of Afghans following the Taliban takeover in August. Videos showed people so desperate to leave that they clung to the landing gear of a plane as it took off. About 120,000 Afghans were airlifted out in a brief period. Around 75,000 of these persons are now in the U.S. Some of these persons qualified for Special Immigrant Visas or for refugee status and are being resettled through established refugee resettlement agencies such as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), and World Relief. Others did not qualify for Legal Permanent Resident status and are here under the Humanitarian Parole program. These are the persons, numbering about 50,000, who, on arrival, were housed in military bases on U.S. soil. There have been reports that, at least in some cases, living conditions in these camps are very poor. Unsanitary conditions, lack of space, and unappetizing food have been reported. Even if physical conditions were ideal, the lack of freedom is difficult to take, especially as time drags on. And those still being held in these camps have been there for five months now.

Since there were no established programs to resettle persons with the immigration status of humanitarian parole, the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security created the Sponsorship Circles program. The basic idea is that small groups of people take on the role of refugee resettlement agencies for a limited period. The duties include welcoming into the community, arranging for housing and furnishings, seeing that the newcomers are clothed and have adequate food, providing financial assistance, assisting with adapting to a new community and a new culture, help with dealing with bureaucracies, help with finding employment, and so on. This is clearly a big job and it will probably go on for much longer than the 90 days required by the program. If you would like more information, see <https://www.sponsorcircles.org/> or google "sponsorship circles".

**Interested in a Conversation Café?**

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Even better if one of the two is trying to speak English more fluently! Setting up the café will take some thought and some time in preparation for when the pandemic allows us to meet safely in person. Would you be willing to participate with other JCIRA members by bringing your ideas to the project? If so, contact Holly Hallman at

[hh.hallman@gmail.com](mailto:hh.hallman@gmail.com)

**Let's make this happen!**

## **WAISN Hosting Washington IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE ADVOCACY DAY 2022**

The Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN) was created to strengthen and champion immigrant and refugee communities. This year, we are more prepared than ever to fight for our neighbors, families, and friends.

Join us from **January 25-27** to demand your legislators protect our immigrant and refugee communities! Advocacy Day will be held virtually, including mtgs with legislators, again this year.

[Register for Advocacy Day](#)

**See section below on Current Legislation.**

WAISN is also looking for volunteers to support making Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Days a success.

[Volunteer Registration](#)

**They have the following position available:**

**Legislative Session Schedulers (4-6 needed)**

**Zoom and Interpretation Tech Support (6+ needed)**

**Spanish & English Consecutive interpretation (15+ needed)**



**Take Action on Current Legislation!**

employers pay into the system but undocumented workers are not eligible for the benefits. One America and many other organizations like JCIRA worked last year as part of the WA Immigrant Relief Fund Coalition to help get over \$340 million in immediate cash assistance as a stop-gap measure but now we are pushing to pass legislation to create a permanent program to ensure all workers have access to benefits if they lose their job.

- [HB 1153](#) **Language Access in K-12 Schools:** Even though schools are required to provide interpreters if requested, too often there are still too many gaps in service for meaningful access by families. Having consistency in information regarding their children's education is of utmost importance and we are working with our partners at Open Door for Multicultural Families in passing legislation to create language access coordinators who will work to ensure schools and districts are serving every family equitably.
- [HB 1842](#) **Helping Immigrants Run for School Board:** It is currently illegal for immigrants who are Legal Permanent Residents to run for school board as an elected office. We want to change that! School boards should reflect the diversity of families' experiences and immigrant families deserve representation in local decisions.
- [SB 5597](#) **Reducing Racism in our Election Systems:** Organizations like One America worked hard to pass the WA Voting Rights Act and were successful in utilizing the law to sue Yakima County over racist voting districts. However, lawsuits can be costly and time consuming so we are pushing legislation to make the process more efficient through a process of preclearance.

## Coming Monday, January 17th!

**Peninsula College – Free Online Film/Discussion to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

**Monday, January 17, 2022**

**5:00pm**

Zoom meeting at <https://pencol-edu.zoom.us/j/82707853221>

Meeting ID: 827 0785 3221.

***Since I Been Down*** (105 minutes) is a documentary film that spotlights social justice issues among prisoners at Clallam Bay Correction Center (CBCC) as they work to eliminate racism and transform their

imprisonment. The film also showcases the city of Tacoma, presenting dramatic stories of how fear, racism, and a false sense of security affected a generation of black and brown children of poor families.

### Panel Discussion, Q & A immediately following the film

Panelists:

- **Carlos Osorio** (he/him), was born in Colombia, crossed the border into the U.S. at age five, grew up undocumented in New York City and became a citizen in his thirties, here in Washington state. He became politically active as a teenager, participating in direct action protests against racism, war and advocating for prison reform. Osorio has been a Baking and Pastry Instructor at CBCC and, while employed at the prison, became active volunteering with inmate cultural groups and local Olympic Peninsula social justice groups.
- **Lesley Hoare** (she/her) has lived and worked in Forks for 13 years. She currently works at the Forks branch of Peninsula College, is an ESL teacher and also a medical interpreter for the community. She is an organizer with el Comité de Derechos Humanos de Forks (Forks Human Rights Committee) and volunteers at CBCC, with Nuestro Grupo Cultural (the Latino cultural group), and S.T.R.E.E.T.S. (Successful Transition and Reentry to Society), a multicultural, prisoner led re-entry program. She has been inspired by the work of inmates and believes that we can form a better society by listening to - and following - the lead of those inside.
- **Dr. Kate Reavey** (she/her) is the director of Studium Generale, a member of the college's Longhouse Team, and the Faculty Equity Coordinator for Peninsula College. Dr. Reavey has an MA in poetry from the University of California, Davis, and a PhD in interdisciplinary studies with a focus on humanities and culture from Union Institute and University. In her doctorate studies, Dr. Reavey focused on the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

For more information about the film, visit <https://www.sincebeendown.com/>

## Meet Jerome, JCIRA Student Volunteer

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**My name is Jerome Reaux Jr. I am a senior at Port Townsend High School, and I enjoy learning, spending time with friends, and also walking my dog. I am a hard worker in and outside the classroom. I try to strive hard to reach my goals.**

**When I was looking for a senior project to take on, my Advanced Media teacher, David Egeler, suggested that working with JCIRA would probably be beneficial for both me and them. I did some research about JCIRA, and I enjoyed reading about how you guys helped immigrants and do honest work. In my honest opinion I have a bit of a personal connection.**

**I have a really great family friend who migrated from Germany in the early 2000's, and she's a great woman. She helped me become the person I am today; most life lessons, all my morals, and the way I present myself are all thanks to her. She has to go through DACA and has to re-register her green card for a certain number of years. I believe that America is sometimes scared of immigrants and doesn't have the best feeling about them. I want to help change that idea in any way I can. I'm not the bravest person, but I can help advertise and make videos or banners to show my support.**

**While making my bio today, my family friend reminded me that I'm a strong person, and I should help as many people as I can even if it's only one person. I took her statement to heart, and I don't want to let her down.**

**Note: JCIRA really appreciates Jerome's help. So far he created an ad for the Leader and helped us get the word out about the Give Jefferson campaign. And there's more in store for him!**

**Thanks, Jerome!!**

## [Missing in Brooks County - film showing and discussion](#)

**Friday | 1/21/2022 | 7:00 PM**

**Online Event**

**Join Meaningful Movies in Kirkland for a FREE**

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selection of the NYC Documentary Film Festival, and winner at the Hot Springs Documentary film festival. Follow the journey of two families who arrive in Brooks County to look for their loved ones, only to find a mystery that ...

[Read more on film and how to link to zoom.](#)

## GOOD NEWS DEPARTMENT

### 1. [Alternatives to Detention](#)

The U.S. government has placed a record number of migrants in the Alternatives to Detention program, which monitors asylum seekers without incarcerating them. There are 150,755 migrant families and people currently in the program, according to Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse of Syracuse University. [Read more here.](#)

### 2. [Immigrant Student Overcomes Language Barriers, Bullying](#)

When Luis Paulino started eighth grade in 2006 after arriving in New York from the Dominican Republic, bullies told him to speak English, which he hadn't learned yet. Cafeteria workers befriended him, and he received a bilingual dictionary. By 2010, he was a tutor in algebra class and helped another newly arrived Dominican student with his schoolwork. Go here to [read or listen to this on NPR StoryCorp.](#)

### 3. [Maine Public Radio Starts Programs for Immigrants](#)

To support the growing number of refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers arriving in the state, Maine Public Radio is offering video newscasts in four languages. It also hired a reporter to focus on these communities. [Read more here.](#)

### 4. [First Cambodian-American Mayor](#)

Sokhary Chau came to the United States as a young Cambodian refugee, a survivor of the Khmer Rouge's brutal rule. Now, he has been sworn in as the mayor of Lowell, Mass., and is the nation's first Cambodian American mayor. [See the AP news for more on this.](#)

### 5. [Immigrant Nurse Helps resettle Afghans in U.S.](#)

Tram Pham recalls coming to the United States as a 22-year-old refugee from Vietnam and being guided through her medical screening by a nurse. Now, she is a nurse screening Afghans seeking U.S. asylum. She is one of many immigrants helping resettle Afghans in the United States. [Read more here.](#)

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**Thanks so much to all of you who contributed to the Give Jefferson campaign at the end of the year. While we don't have final figures, JCIRA expects to get a generous donation from the Give Jefferson Fund. That money will directly go to families in need.**

**Thanks also to everyone who donated directly to JCIRA during 2021 with monetary donations, time and talent. Because of you, we are able assist hundreds of people over the year, and to investigate new ways of advocating for immigrants. We go forward with the hope and the belief that we will have community support for our programs, new or existing.**

**Our mission, in brief, is to make our area a welcoming place where immigrants feel they are part of the community and can thrive. Your ongoing support is such an important part of making that mission be true.**

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*Our mission is to support the rights of immigrants and their families, giving priority to those who live or work on the Olympic Peninsula and immigrant detainees within Washington State, through access to legal services, standing witness, family support, community education and advocacy for local, state and national issues.*

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