



*The Greater Burlington*

**Multicultural Resource Center** *presents*

# **2017 Diversity Conference**

**Monday, March 27 ~ Hilton Hotel, Burlington**

## **Conference Objective**

The Conference will explore the challenges and possibilities that are faced in the workplace today. We will also seek to explore the leadership roles that are exercised as we try to empower ourselves and our communities of color.

## **Agenda**

### **8:00 Registration**

### **9:00 Opening Keynote**

*introduced by Dr. John Sama (UVM)*

**Dr. Jonathan Jansen**, Former President, University of the Free State, South Africa

### **9:30 Table Discussion**

### **10:00 Panel: Diversity in Education**

**Ame Lambert**, Chief Diversity Officer, Champlain College

**Miguel Fernandez**, Chief Diversity Officer, Middlebury College

**Lacretia Flash**, Office of Human Resources, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, UVM

**Moise St. Louis**, Associate Dean of Students/Dir. Center for Multicultural Affairs and Services,  
Saint Michael's College

**Moderator: Lashawn Sells**, Principal, Sustainability Academy, Burlington

### **11:30 Table Discussion**

### **12:00 Lunch**

### **12:30 Lunch Speaker**

**Wally Amos**

### **1:15 Panel: Refugee & Immigrant Crisis, A Vermont Response**

**James Lyall**, American Civil Liberties Union

**Amila Merdzanovic**, Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program

**Fuad Ndibalema**, Business Owner

**Khara Neopeney**

**Jeetan Khadka**, Community Organizer and Business Owner

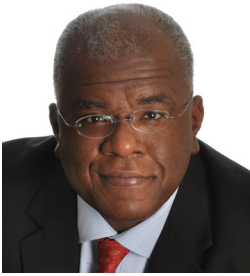
**Moderator: Prof. Susan Comerford**

### **2:30 Closing Remarks**

**Rachel Siegel**, Executive Director, Peace & Justice Center

## **Conference Sponsors**

Church Street Marketplace • United Way of Northwest Vermont • KeyBank • People's United Bank  
Peace & Justice Center • Vermont Department of Labor • Association of Africans Living in Vermont



#### Opening Keynote:

### **Dr. Jonathan Jansen**

#### **Former President, University of the Free State, South Africa**

Jonathan Jansen is Vice Chancellor and Rector of the University of the Free State and President of the South African Institute of Race Relations. He holds a PhD from Stanford University, the MS degree from Cornell University, and honorary doctorates of education from the University of Edinburgh (Scotland) and Cleveland State University (USA). He is a Fellow of the American Educational Research Association and a Fellow of the Academy of Science of the Developing World.

His book *Knowledge in the Blood: Confronting Race and the Apartheid Past* (Stanford 2009) was listed as one of the best books of that year by the American Libraries Association. His new book, *Schools that Work*, uses video-documentaries to capture what happens inside disadvantaged schools which nevertheless produce the best results in physical science and mathematics in South Africa; this book has been sent to every high school in the country. He also writes popular books like *Great South African Teachers* (with two students), *We need to talk*, and *We need to act* (2013); and is a columnist for *The Times*.

In 2013, he was awarded the Education Africa Lifetime Achiever Award in New York and the Spendlove Award from the University of California for his contributions to tolerance, democracy, and human rights. In May 2014, he received an honorary doctor of letters degree at the University of Vermont and recently *Knowledge in the Blood* also won the Nayef Al Rodhan Prize, the largest award from the British Academy for the Social Science and Humanities, for its contribution to scholarly excellence and transcultural understanding. His latest book, *Leading for Change: race, intimacy and leadership on divided university campuses*, has just been released by Routledge; and next year he plans to publish a new book called *Race, Romance and Reprisal among university students*.



#### Lunch Speaker:

### **Wally Amos**

Wally Amos lived in Tallahassee, Florida until he was twelve. When his parents divorced, he then moved to Manhattan, New York with his aunt, where he enrolled at the Food Trades Vocational High School. He showed his interest in cooking at a very young age, and it was from his aunt, who would bake cookies for him, that Amos would develop his chocolate chip cookies recipe. Amos would improve on his aunt's recipe, which was already uncommon because it included several ingredients not generally associated with chocolate chip cookies.

Shortly before graduation, Amos dropped out of high school to join the United States Air Force. He earned his high school equivalency diploma before being honorably discharged from the military, where he had a distinguished career.

Returning to New York City, Amos went to college to become a secretary, and following graduation, took a clerical job with the William Morris Agency. Eventually, he became the agency's first African American talent agent. Amos attracted clients by sending them chocolate chip cookies along with an invitation to visit him. He represented superstars, such as Diana Ross & the Supremes and Simon & Garfunkel.

In 1975, a friend suggested to Amos that he set up a store to sell his cookies, and in March of that year, the first "Famous Amos" cookie store opened in Los Angeles,



California. He started the business with the help of a \$25,000 loan from Marvin Gaye and Helen Reddy. The new company began to expand, and, eventually, “Famous Amos” chocolate chip cookies could be found on supermarket shelves across the United States. He became a well enough known figure culturally that he appeared as himself in the Taxi (TV series) episode “Latka’s Cookies” in 1981. Thanks in part to the success of his cookie company, he was hired to deliver speeches. He has written nine books, many of which have a self-help theme, including *The Cookie Never Crumbles* and *The Power in You*.

Due to financial troubles, Amos was forced to sell the Famous Amos Company, and since the name “Famous Amos” was trademarked by his former company, Amos had to use “The Uncle Noname’s Cookie Company” as his new company’s name. A Famous Amos distributor at the time, Lou Avignone, heard Amos on a local radio talk show and, inspired by Amos’ story of his early business success with Famous Amos and his indomitable spirit, contacted Amos with the idea for starting a new business. In 1994, the two became partners and subsequently launched “Uncle Noname Gourmet Muffins.” The company focused on fat-free, nutritious muffins at that time. Uncle Noname ultimately became Uncle Wally’s Muffin Company in 1999. The muffins are sold in more than 3,500 stores nationwide.

In 1979, Amos’s long-time friend and publicist John Rosica introduced him to Literacy Volunteers of America. Since that time, Amos has advocated literacy and helped thousands of adults learn to read. In 1987, he also hosted a television series designed to teach others how to read, entitled *Learn to Read*, produced by Kentucky Educational Television and WXYZ-TV.

#### **Closing Remarks**

#### **Rachel Siegel**

#### **Executive Director, Peace & Justice Center**

Rachel became the Executive Director of the Peace & Justice Center in 2013. She is raising two children with her partner Jules on their mini-urban homestead in Burlington. She is committed to the causes of economic, racial, and environmental justice; has tremendous organizational and fundraising skills; is a proven leader in the community; and is well-established in Burlington. She has worked for positive change as an advocate for women and economic justice through both Vermont Works for Women and as a founding member of Vermont Access to Reproductive Freedom. She recently served as a Burlington City Councilor representing the Old North End and is a dancer/performer hoping to get moving again soon.



## **Panel: Diversity in Education**

### **Ame Lambert, Chief Diversity Officer, Champlain College**

As leader of the Champlain College's Office of Diversity & Inclusion (ODI), Ame works with all campus stakeholders to create a diverse and inclusive community.

Ame Lambert and the ODI staff work directly with students to prepare them to thrive in a global, multicultural, interdependent world. The office serves as a resource to campus departments on diversity issues and provides training, programming and support services to underrepresented populations.

In addition to her work at Champlain College, Ame is pursuing doctorate in human resource development with a focus on organizational development and change. Her interests are individual / organizational learning and development and change.

Prior to Champlain, Ame was Director of Intercultural Affairs at Northwest Missouri State University. She is a graduate of Baylor University and earned her Master's degree in Human Resources and Labor Relations from Michigan State University. Originally from Nigeria, Ame is interested in Nigerian music and movies as media of cultural story telling and story shaping.

### **Miguel Fernandez, Chief Diversity Officer, Middlebury College**

Miguel Fernández is the Chief Diversity Officer at Middlebury College, charged with promoting equity and inclusion in every aspect of the educational, residential, and professional life of the College. He serves as a member of the President's Senior Leadership Group, contributing to strategic institutional discussions and planning, works on faculty and curricular diversity initiatives, and supports the Dean of the College on student life issues related to diversity. Miguel holds a Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins University in Hispanic Studies and has been a professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese since 1995. He is editor for Latin American literature and cultures of *Decimonónica*, a journal of 19th-century Hispanic cultural production. His latest teaching project has employed project-based learning to put on full theater productions in Spanish.

### **Dr. Loretta Johnson Flash, Office of Human Resources, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, UVM**

Dr. Flash is the Senior Advisor and Chief of Staff to the Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs at the University of Vermont, where she helped establish the President's Commission for Inclusive Excellence. For many years, Loretta served as the Assistant Dean for conduct, Policy and Climate for the Division of Student Affairs at UVM, where she created and led the Division's Diversity Council and provided leadership in major initiatives, including a nationally recognized diversity professional development program and a multicultural competence and assessment process. Loretta was awarded the Susan Hasazi ALANA Award for outstanding Academic Achievement in Doctoral Education from the College of Education and Social Services at UVM.

### **Moise St. Louis, Associate Dean of Students/Dir. Center for Multicultural Affairs and Services, Saint Michael's College**

Moise has three bachelor's degrees from University of Massachusetts-Amherst: Political Science; Afro-American Studies; Social Thought and Political Economy; Master's in Comparative Politics and International Relations; and is nearing completion of doctorate in same field.

Moise has broad expertise in student affairs and multicultural student development and services. Within student affairs, his focused interests are leadership development along with academic and social counseling. As an academic instructor, Moise's expertise is in political, economic, social and international topics.

### **Lashawn Sells (Moderator), Principal, Sustainability Academy, Burlington**

Mrs. Sells has also served as Elementary and Middle School Teacher in the Burlington School District. She was the Director of Diversity and Equity for the Burlington School District for many years and an active community member.



## **Panel: Refugee & Immigrant Crisis, A Vermont Response**

### **James Lyall, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union of Vermont**

James Lyall joined the ACLU of Vermont in 2016 and is the 12th director in the organization's 50-year history. He was previously a staff attorney for the ACLU of Arizona where in 2013 he helped to create the first ACLU satellite office in Tucson, Arizona to investigate and litigate civil rights issues related to the U.S.-Mexico border. Prior to joining the ACLU, James was a law fellow at the Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project in Los Angeles, where he provided legal representation to detained and unaccompanied immigrant children in deportation proceedings. A New England native, James is a graduate of Middlebury College and has a law degree from Georgetown University.

### **Amila Merdzanovic, MALD, Director, Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program**

Amila came to Vermont in 1995 as a refugee from Bosnia and Herzegovina and is the first former refugee leading the USCRI Vermont field office. She brings over 10 years of experience working in refugee resettlement providing direct services, program management, and advocacy on behalf of refugees and asylees in Vermont. Most recently, she graduated from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University with a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy. She holds an undergraduate degree in International Relations from Mount Holyoke College. Her interests span across disciplines including forced migration, human rights, and conflict resolution. Amila is fluent in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian and has basic knowledge of Russian.

### **Fuad Ndibalema, Business Owner**

Fuad Ndibalema is a Congolese Immigrant who has successfully launched his own business with more than 30 employees popularly known as SamosaMan. He supplies to many stores across Vermont.

### **Khara Neopeney**

Khara lives in Burlington with his wife and two children. He came to the US under the resettlement process of Bhutanese Refugees that began in 2008. Along with more than 100,000 people, Khara was evicted from Bhutan by the Royal Government of Bhutan due to ethnic cleansing policy. Khara became a refugee for 18 years in Nepal. He was an educator in Nepal, and at present is a social worker, working with seniors under the Long Term Care Medicaid.

### **Jeetan Khadka, Community Organizer and Business Owner**

Jeetan Khadka is a former Bhutanese refugee who settled in Burlington in 2008. He has been very active in the community and was an advocate for Youth on Boards. Jeetan served as a City Commissioner and now owns his own Business in Essex Junction.

### **Prof. Susan Comerford (Moderator)**

Susan "Suzy" Comerford has an earned doctorate in organizational behavior and is currently an Associate Professor on the faculty at the University of Vermont. Her research agenda is focused in three interconnected areas: international issues including refugees and human rights, the learning processes involved in effectively meeting the challenges of an increasingly multicultural, multivocal, globalizing world, (local, national and international), and leadership within these contexts. Her teaching areas include human rights, social policy, leadership development and theory, diversity issues, gender issues in the workplace, and refugees. She is actively involved in issues of equity and excellence for ALL children in the community and the state, with a particular focus on race, disability and income. Before coming to the university, she worked for many years in war zones around the world with refugees.

