

Y-WE Career Day



Y-WE Career Day 2019 Speaker Biographies



Saturday, April 27, 2019
Cascadia College/UW Bothell, Mobius Hall

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Christy Abram

Workshop: The World Needs to Hear Your Story

About: Christy Abram is a best-selling author and founder of Brown Girls Write—a self-care initiative that helps women and girls of color heal through expressive writing. For over a decade, Christy has dedicated her life to trauma survivors speak their truth and rise above brokenness. Inspired by her journey, Christy uses storytelling to teach women and youth to share bold narratives and stand in their power. Her straight-talking approach to self-care offers participants a direct and uncensored space for reflection, self-love, and sisterhood. Join Christy on her mission to help 100,000 women heal at www.brown-girls-write.com.



Ashley Alvarez

Panelist: Women and Gender Non-binary Farmers

About: Ashley Alvarez (Black, Unangax & Filipina) As a first-generation college student and Gates Millennium Scholar, Ashley attended Western Washington University and earned a Bachelor's of Arts in human services. In 2015, she earned her Master's in Social Work from the University of Washington with a concentration in community-centered integrative practice. Ashley co-owns Indigenous Roots Farm, a collective of BIPOC land workers serving BIPOC communities through educational workshops, access to greenspace, indigenous foods & medicines. She produces artwork steeped in Indigenous and POC resilience and co-hosts "Fresh Out of Dough", a podcast dedicated to travel, food, and social commentary.



Nyema Clark

Keynote Panelist

Panelist: Women and Gender Non-binary Farmers

About: Seattle native Nyema Clark is founder and Director of Nurturing Roots Farm located on Beacon Hill, a program committed to addressing food justice issues in the community. She is also an organizing keyholder of the Black Power Epicenter Collective. As a black small business owner and founder of Avenue South, she produces handmade natural culinary and body products. Nyema is committed to enriching underserved communities. Her strength and overall goals are centered in youth empowerment and community economic sustainability.



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Paulina Deschamps-Ramirez

Panelist: Women of Color in the Environmental Movement

About: Paulina Deschamps-Ramírez was born and raised in Mexico City, and she lived there until 3 years ago, when she started to call Seattle home. She has 8 years of experience conducting research, analysis and advocacy on the land and forest rights of Indigenous Peoples & local communities in Mexico. Her work has focused on the climate change, deforestation and human rights agendas. She has worked with international organizations, academia, Indigenous Peoples, peasant communities, rural producer associations, national and subnational governments, legislators, and research institutions in Mexico and the US. Paulina has a MSc in Environmental Policy by the University of Oxford.



Shanelle Donaldson

Panelist: Women and Gender Non-binary Farmers

About: Shanelle Donaldson West is an urban farmer, food preservationist, and food justice advocate focused on healthy relationships to land, power and community. From working with toddlers growing gardens to connecting locally sourced food to people experiencing homelessness, Shanelle has supported more than one thousand King County residents over the last decade. She expanded her nutrition education to include food preservation classes as a method of self-care and extending the harvest. Most recently, she co-founded Percussion Farms to reconnect people of color to the land and their right to healthy lives.



She is also Farm Coordinator at Seattle Community Farm for Asian Counseling and Referral Services (ACRS). Shanelle is a proud alumna of the Black and Latinx Farm Immersion Class at Soul Fire Farm in Grafton, New York. When she's not farming, Shanelle can be found reading, cooking with her husband, Mike, playing board games, or most likely staring at her sweet dog, Koda.

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Gerry Ebalaloza-Tunnell

Workshop: The Power of Storytelling

About: Gerry Ebalaloza-Tunnell is the Principal Consultant of Co3 Consulting: Co-Creating Cohesive Communities and the Founder of Na Wahine O Ka Mana- The Power of Women Summit. Born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii and now residing in Seattle, Washington, she is an advocate for social justice and alternative methods to repair harm caused by crime. Through her prescription of Alo Hā, the ability to engage in transformative dialogue with resilience and the power of Ho'oponopono, she believes that we can resolve conflict with grace, empathy, and forgiveness; cultivating an environment of healing, justice, and peace for ALL. Gerry is a Doctoral candidate at the California Institute of Integral Studies and holds a graduate degree in Whole Systems Design from Antioch University, Seattle and her undergraduate in Social Sciences from Washington State University.



Kelsi Giswold

Workshop: Healing Touch – Wellness and Vitality through Soma Structural Integration

About: Kelsi Giswold BFA, LMP, Certified Advanced Practitioner has been practicing Soma Neuromuscular Integration® (SNI®) since 2008 and is currently teaching at the Soma Institute of Neuromuscular Integration. As a freelance graphic designer with a BFA from Western Washington University, she has an appreciation for balance and beauty. Kelsi approaches the human body with sensitivity, wonder and a profound respect for the powerful union of the mind, body and spirit. She encourages her clients and students to be fully engaged in their life by being fully present in their bodies. Kelsi is constantly attending continuing education courses to deepen her understanding of the human body, mind and spirit. She believes that curiosity and lifelong learning are the fuels of a creative and fulfilling life.



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Anastacia Greene

Panelist: Women of Color in the Environmental Movement

About: Anastasia is a Philadelphia native - a city girl at heart who grew up in Virginia. When she was eight years old, she fell in love with the wild outdoors as a Girl Scout and continues to embrace that spirit of exploration to this day. When not working, you can find her all over the Western US camping, hiking and rafting her way through national parks, forests and any other wild place. She also holds a special place for city parks and is currently trying to make a dent in visiting all of Seattle's 400+ park units! She holds a BA in Public Relations and an MBA with an emphasis in Strategic Communications. She's worked in various strategic communications and media relations roles in the nonprofit policy advocacy, client services and integrated marketing spaces. Currently, she works in crisis and issues management for WE Communications. Previously, she managed paid, owned and earned media for the Pacific Northwest for The Wilderness Society where she dealt with educating the public on the legal, policy and community impact of public lands law. Anastasia serves on the Board of Directors for High Country News, a nonprofit news organization focused on the West, mentors for Young Women Empowered and was a past Associate Board member for City Kids Wilderness Project, an organization aimed at providing enriching life experiences by introducing D.C. children of color to the great outdoors. She speaks on environmental communications and justice at institutions such as the University of California Los Angeles, University of Washington and George Mason University.



Aramis Hamer

Keynote Panelist

Aramis O. Hamer is a visual artist and muralist living in Seattle, WA. Her subject matter is inspired by the cosmos, music, nature, divine femininity, and the complexities throughout the Black culture. From a very young age she always loved to create, but at the age of fifteen she discovered her love for acrylic paints. With the supportive art community in the Pacific Northwest, Aramis has been able to exhibit her colorful creations at many different exhibitions in the greater Seattle area- including the EMP Museum, Paramount Theater, Martyr Sauce Gallery, Columbia City Gallery, and more. Aramis created the iconic purple goddess in 2016 for KEXP radio station at Seattle Center which became a catalyst to her art career. You can find many of her designs all over the city including Jimi Hendrix Park. As a self-taught artist, Aramis lets the pull of her imagination be her guide. Her adventure is just beginning, and she invites others to join her on this journey. Learn more about Aramis' work at www.aohamer.com.



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Natasha Hill

Workshop: What Do Lawyers Do?

About: Natasha Hill joined Winston & Cashatt in 2018; her practice areas focus on family law, and civil litigation. Prior to joining the firm, Natasha practiced for over 10 years in Los Angeles, California, where she handled family law matters, divorces, paternity, child custody and child support, as well as a variety of civil litigation matters, including contract and partnership disputes, copyright and trademark infringement, and entertainment and media matters in both state and federal court. As plaintiff's counsel, Natasha has litigated against Fortune 500 entertainment and media companies, achieving great results for clients using alternative dispute resolution procedures. As defense counsel, she has defended small to large businesses and high-profile clients, who often have unique needs and require counsel to assist with public relations and opinions.



Dr. Anisa Ibrahim

Keynote Panelist

Dr. Anisa Ibrahim is a general pediatrician at Harborview Medical Center's Children and Teens clinic. Dr. Ibrahim has always had a passion for serving vulnerable refugee and immigrant populations through providing patient care and active engagement in the community both as a mentor and a community leader. Dr. Ibrahim's clinical and community-based practice is focused on refugee and immigrant health. She provides care for newly arrived refugees and immigrants and children with social and medical complexity. Outside of her clinical work, Dr. Ibrahim is the president of the board of directors for the Somali Health Board.



She is involved in projects that address barriers to accessing health care for vulnerable populations including culturally adapting educational and screening materials, facilitating focus groups in both English and Somali, and informing community-partnered research practices. Nationally, she has collaborated with experts at the North American Refugee Health Conference to foster advocacy through coalition building and incorporation of migration health into medical education. She also sits on the executive committee for the Council on Community Pediatrics, a council of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

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Neli Jasuja

Panel Moderator

About: Neli first connected with Young Women Empowered as a mentor with the Nature Connections program and fell in love with the powerful intergenerational community of diverse womxn supporting, motivating, and inspiring each other in the outdoors. During this time, she served an AmeriCorps term with Solid Ground teaching nutrition, cooking, and gardening with elementary school students experiencing food insecurity in Seattle Public Schools. Neli is passionate about empowering youth, growing food, holistic health, outdoor learning, and social justice. In particular, she appreciates exploring organic cycles of life and death as a framework to sustainably participate in our environment and communities as well as to connect more deeply to self and others. Neli also goes by her full name Sonali, feel free to call her both!



Esmay Jimenez

Multimedia Journalist & Writer

Keynote Panelist

Born in Mexico and raised in rural Washington, Esmay Jimenez is a multimedia journalist and writer. Her work has appeared in High Country News, the Washington Post's The Lily, National Native News, and NPR. She is additionally a Maynard Fellow and Next Gen Radio alum. In April, she joined KUOW covering immigration. A first generation high school and college grad, Esmay's goal is to rethink journalism and writing as a tool for community building.



Jasmine Jones

Workshop: Financial Literacy

About: Jasmine spends her time as a Business Development Specialist at Seattle Credit Union on the go meeting people, building relationships, learning about the needs of communities, and strategizing on how to meet those needs. She organizes and facilitates financial literacy workshops and classes for members, builds unique promotions for our business partners that help their employees achieve a financial advantage, and above all, strives every day to advocate on behalf of our communities so that they may truly prosper. In an industry rife with competition, complexity, and impersonality, Jasmine weaves uncommon authenticity into every interaction she has. Authenticity that not only allows members to trust Jasmine with their dreams, but empowers them to turn those dreams into reality. Jasmine knows that prosperity is only sustainable when built upon financial stability.



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She also knows that anyone can learn financial independence. That's why she works tirelessly every day to equip members with the tools and knowledge they need to achieve financial freedom. While Jasmine never predicted a career like this, it's clear she's found her niche. One that aligns her passion for community advocacy with her steadfast endeavors to empower others.

Kathleen Julca

Panel Moderator

About: Kathleen Julca plays the flute for Tacoma Youth Symphony Association and competitive chess. She reads voraciously over physics and ethical sciences, and recently moved to the Pacific Northwest from Kaiserslautern, Germany. Kathleen joined Y-WE's Environmental Leadership Council (part of Nature Connections) where she nurtures a passion of environmental justice in her community.



Amanda Lawrence

Workshop: Embrace the Chase

About: Amanda Lawrence is a Salisbury University & University of Maryland Eastern Shore graduate, pursuing a graduate degree in Environmental Molecular Science. Raised in Annapolis, Maryland; proximity to the Chesapeake Bay inspired her to become involved in protecting something that is incapable of protecting itself through restoring habitat and managing resources. Conservation and sustainability are two things she wants to address in her future career as a research scientist. She also embraces environmental education as an important tool for making the public aware of issues and understand the ways they can help.



Deepa Lyer

Panelist: Women and Gender Non-binary Farmers

About: Deepa Lyer is the Senior New Roots Program Coordinator with the International Rescue Committee (IRC). She has been with the IRC for five years working in the New Roots program, starting out in Oakland and moving to Seattle in 2017. She received her Masters from Michigan State University's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources in 2012. She co-founded and co-directed an urban agriculture and food justice organization called sol, sustaining ourselves locally in Oakland, CA in 2003. Before that and during those times at sol, she spent many years working in school garden programs and working on farms in New Jersey, California, and Michigan. She is the Co-founder and Co-director of Keerai Farm, a POC-centered farm project in Enumclaw, WA. She has been a student of Capoeira Angola for nearly 20 years. She has two beautiful children, enjoys riding bicycles for long distances, loves her mother's cooking, and loves to dance, sing, and be silly.



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Tameka McNair

Workshop: Not Your Typical Engineer

About: Tameka McNair was born and raised in a single parent household in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. After graduating from high school she moved to Tempe, Arizona where she obtained her Bachelor's of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from Arizona State University. Focusing on Human Factors Engineering a minor in African American Studies in May 2010 and completed an MBA from Anderson University in December 2017. In the middle of Engineering school, Tameka gave birth to her twin boys who are currently 12 years old. A big believer in inspiring and empowering women and minorities of all ages to pursue their dreams despite the obstacles they may face due the challenges that she personally overcame. Tameka is a Program Manager focusing on Security training for Engineering groups across Microsoft's Cloud + Artificial Intelligence organization. Prior to Microsoft Tameka worked in 2 other industries (Manufacturing & Energy) holding various roles. Tameka is the Co-Founder for the Women-IN-Energy conference a platform that provides an opportunity for women to learn and engage in thoughtful, relevant discussions focused on development and the Energy industry.



Nikkita Oliver

Closing Keynote Address

Nikkita Oliver is a Seattle-based writer, teaching artist, attorney, and organizer. Her writing has been published in the South Seattle Emerald, Crosscut, the Establishment, Last Real Indians, The Seattle Weekly, and the Stranger. Oliver holds a J.D. and Masters of Education from the University of Washington. She is also the case manager for Creative Justice, an arts-based alternative to incarceration, and has worked for arts organizations such as Writers in the Schools and Arts Corps.

Nikkita is one of the Seattle Met's 2018 50 Most Influential Women in Seattle, and the recipient of the 2018 UW Women's Center Woman of Courage Award, 2018 UW Evans School of Public Policy NOW (Network of Womxn) Award, 2017 City Arts Artists of the Year, Gender Justice Power Award (2017), Seattle King County NAACP President's Leadership Award (2017), Columbia Legal Services Imagine Justice Visionary of the Year (2017), the University of Washington Women's Law Caucus Outstanding Achievement as a Young Lawyer Award (2017), the Seattle Office of Civil Rights Artist Human Rights Leader Award (2015), and the 2014 Seattle Poetry Slam Grand Champion. She has opened for Cornel West and Chuck D of Public Enemy and performed on The Late Night Show with Stephen Colbert. She is also the first political candidate of the Seattle Peoples Party; running for Mayor of Seattle in 2017 where she finished 3rd (of 21 candidates).



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Samantha Pak

Workshop: Telling Our Stories – The Importance of Representation in the Media

About: Samantha Pak is Seattle-area native who has been working in journalism since 2008. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Washington and is currently the senior editor for Sound Publishing's seven Eastside publications. She also writes book recommendations for the Northwest Asian Weekly.

Samantha is a current member and former board member of the Asian American Journalists Association's Seattle chapter, which works toward fair and equal coverage of Asian Americans in the media and equal representation in newsrooms. Since she started her career in the field, it has become her passion to tell stories about people and communities who typically do not receive as much coverage in media.



Jyoti Jani Patel

Panel Moderator

About: Jyoti Jani Patel is the principal and owner of Spille LLC. She brings 13 years of experience in high impact corporate roles and merges them with her astute creative mind to deliver a user focused, highly valued, transformative workshop experience. Jyoti's career has spanned two continents. As a facilitator, manager, and consultant, she has led changes in a high technology environment by helping drive team strategy development, project leadership, and process improvement. Jyoti's clients include Boeing, Seattle Public Schools, as well as clients in non-profit organizations.

She holds a Masters in Organizational Design from Seattle University, Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Central Florida, and is a Certified LEGO Serious Play Facilitator, trained by Robert Rasmussen.



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Dr. Joyce K Paul

Workshop: Straying From the Path to Find Your Path

About: Dancer, choreographer & anthropologist Joyce Paul Siamak has been creating movement for the stage and street theatre since 1986. Born in New Delhi, India and now a native of Redmond, WA, Joyce began her dancing career inspired by the dancers of Bharatiya Kala Kendra as they played the epic story of Ramlila. She joined the institute to learn Bharatanatyam under the direction of the renowned Leela Samson in 1986, completed her "Arangetram" in 1992 and continued to perform for productions with her guru. Her choreographic career began in 1986 when she co-founded Abhivyakti Karya Shala, a grassroots performing arts organization that sought to bring social change with dance, music and theatre. Joyce continued to learn and dabble with other arts forms such as Carnatic vocal, Chhau, Odissi and Mohiniyattam. She spent time honing her skill with stalwarts such as Prof C.V. Chandrashekhar, A. Janardhanan and Kalamandalam Gopi.



In academia, she focused on the Anthropology of performance. Her Ph.D thesis on Anthropometry and Physiology of elite Bharatanatyam dancers remains the only work of its kind till today. From the University of Delhi, she moved on to work for the leading software company in India which paved her path to her UX research career at Microsoft, ultimately bringing her to settle in the Pacific Northwest. The unique quality of Joyce's work is her ability to stay within the definition of classical dance while pushing boundaries and exploring non-traditional themes and contexts. Her work also tends to gravitate towards social problems and women's issues. Her choreographic works include acclaimed works such as Kalaprayanam, Laya Samvaad, Ecclesiastes Reworked, Guru Ashtakam, Shanthala Varnam, Maand and Mother Mary Thillana amongst others. Along with teaching and running her own company, Arpan, she is also faculty at the Spectrum Dance Theatre teaching and choreographing for their annual Academy shows. Joyce occasionally teaches master classes at the University of Washington and Cornish College. She is a published author for dance medicine and Anthropology journals. For more information visit www.joycekpaul.com | For her dance company and Vidyalaya, visit www.arpanarts.org

Lucia Santos

Panel Moderator

About: Lucia, current Y-WE youth participant, joined the Environmental Leadership Council because "for me, understanding the environment and the land I reside on is crucial to understanding myself, my community, and the ways I move through the world." She believes it's an important time to be reconnecting with the Earth and learning more about the land's history, as well as its present and future state, and working together to ensure that the environment is healthy and well cared for. Through the ELC, she gets the opportunity to be part of a community that cares deeply about the way we interact with the Earth and with each other.



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Denaya Shorter

Panelist: Women of Color in the Environmental Movement

About: Denaya Shorter is a California transplant- born in the Bay Area, moving most recently from the Central Valley. With a passion for wildlife, education, environment, and social justice, she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biology and ecology from CSU, Fresno beginning her career in community outreach, and wildlife and resource management with the US Forest Service. As an African-American, female, wildlife biologist, Denaya struggled with the absence of diversity and lackluster outreach efforts to POC communities and decided to make a career transition that would allow her to address these disparities.



She has since relocated to the PNW and recently received her M.A.Ed. in urban environmental education from Antioch University. Denaya went on to gain experience in environmental education, community engagement, journalism, food systems and food justice programming, and youth leadership and development. She currently works as an education and outreach coordinator for Waste Management and supports Seattle Parks and Recreation's Trails Program. Denaya continues to advocate for the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the environmental field and hopes to inspire and elevate the voices of young people and communities of color in demanding healthy communities and a healthy planet.

Vero Vergara

Panelist: Women and Gender Non-binary Farmers

About: Vero Vergara is a non-binary, queer, multiracial latinx farmer and community organizer who grew up brown in small town Oregon. They are a farmer of Sweet Hollow Farm, a community supported and worker-owned cooperative farm that grows vegetables and herbs for the diverse communities of King County. Vero is also a community organizer working in food access and food systems change with an anti-capitalist, decolonial, and social justice lens on agriculture and movement building. Vero is dedicated to learning about and understanding the complexities of being a multiracial farmer doing land-based work on stolen Puget Sound Salish land in Woodinville, WA. They hold this responsibility hand in hand with excitement, joy, and faith in the abundant future of collective liberation.

