

## Special Thanks

### Family Justice Center Staff & Mentors

*Susun Kim, Executive Director*  
*Tamina Alon, Director of Operations*  
*Annabelle Berrios, Advocacy & Training Manager, Community Fellows Program Lead*  
*Oravanh Thamassen, Navigator*  
*Natalie Oleas, Navigator*  
*Marisol Martinez, Navigation Support*  
*Isabella Valladares, Project Assistant*  
*Marta Martinez, Project Assistant*

### Non-Staff Mentors

*Dr. Vernice Solimar, Retired Chair Integral Psychology Department, JFK University*  
*Marilyn Langlois, Richmond Progressive A.*  
*Terri Waller, WCC USD*  
*Kayla Jackson, CC DA's Office*  
*Florence Davis, CVS*  
*Jade Lopez, Formerly of Youth Tech Health*

### Special Thanks

*Dr. Monica Sharma, Author, Radical Transformative Leadership*  
*Hilary Roberts, Peer Advocates Training*  
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*Rose Duignan, Presenter*  
*Emita Amatya, Videographer*  
*Banana Leaf, Catering*



**FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER**

# 2017 Community Fellows Celebration



*Friday, December 8, 2017*  
*Community Room*  
*256 24th Street*  
*Richmond, CA 94804*

# Welcome

*"Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work. You don't give up." Annie Lamott*

*No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it." Einstein*

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*In March 2016, the Contra Costa Family Justice Center launched a new iteration of its community fellowship program designed to equip survivors of interpersonal violence with leadership skills to empower their long-term success. The program curriculum was adapted from the leadership model of Dr. Monica Sharma, author of Radical Transformative Leadership.*

*Now on its second year, this 10-month program accepted 5 fellows for each program location, Central and West. Their work aligned with the Center's mission of violence prevention/interruption and long-term sustainability for community members in the areas of sexual abuse, child abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse and human trafficking.*

*As part of a cohort, Fellows received training regarding how to develop community projects on their own while guided by mentors in track areas including advocacy, training & education, outreach and project coordination. Nine Fellows are making presentations about their projects today. For more information about their projects, visit [www.cocofamilyjustice.org](http://www.cocofamilyjustice.org).*

*The team called itself CONTESSA: Contra Costa Optimistic Nurturing Thoughtful Empowering Sister Survivor Alliance.*

## **Janell Coleman** **Project Marsh Creek Community**

*Hi my name is Janell Coleman and I am a Community Fellow at the Central Center.*



*During this 10-month journey I not only began to develop my project but in addition I received help for my past DV trauma, gained skills working in service to diverse communities, and I shifted from a DV survivor into an overcomer!*

*At present, I have completed degrees in Psychology and Sociology. The newfound confidence gained through working with the Family Justice Center empowered me to accept a leadership position as a Program Coordinator of an After School Literacy program geared towards the underserved Far East County African American student population.*

*My vision is that more people of my communities can realize that our feedback and participation matter. My hope is that as I continue to partner with Marsh Creek Management we host routine Community Celebratory activities such as Family Movie Nights. We start this month. Connecting socially is a non-threatening baby step with the latent purpose of building trust in interpersonal relationships. I want our community to move from isolation to a unified community filled with pride and access to services for interpersonal violence.*

# About the Fellows

## **Esmeralda Cardenas** **Project Happy Women**

*My name is Esmeralda Cardenas and I am a Community Fellow at the Central Family Justice Center.*

*I was born in a town called El Valenciano in the state of Michoacan, Mexico. My parents are farmers, dedicated to the harvest of strawberries, cucumbers, onions and corn. I am the oldest of four sisters.*



*I learned to make embroidery and crochet at about 10 years old, taught by my grandmother. I learned that this is a way to relax and to stop thinking about worries because you have to focus on what you are doing: selecting colors, selecting shapes. In Mexico, most people I knew made crafts like these, turning them into sweaters, scarves, and hats. That way, could make things the way we liked them without spending a lot of money.*

*My mission with **Project Happy Women** was to help clients from the Central Center manage stress and learn to crochet and embroidery, so they could keep the items they create for themselves or to give away as gifts. I taught 6 workshops at the Central Center so far. Our last meeting will be December 16 where we will have a holiday celebration and plan classes for next year. My goal is to become fluent in English. I have a tutor assisting me once a week.*

## Event Schedule

### **Fellows' Presentations**

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*3:00 PM – 4:00 PM*

*Hear from the Fellows as they describe the motivations behind their projects and how their projects will improve their community*

### **Reception & Early Dinner**

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*4:00 PM – 5:00 PM*

*We invite you to stay and mingle with our community members and ask follow up questions to the Fellows*

*\* Dinner to be served in the Sun Room\**

# About the Fellows

## **Sparkle Shanell Stephen** **Project Pals for Change**

*My name is Sparkle Stephens and I am a Community Fellow at the West Family Justice Center.*

*"It's not about how you fall; rather how you fly."*

*An aspiring Social Worker to be from Richmond, CA and the creator of **Pals 4 Change**, a program that seeks to connect isolated survivors of abuse with pets. Through the opportunities at the Family Justice Center, I was able to turn my past into a platform to help others. I was abused by a partner, not physically, but emotionally. My confidence fell and I almost dropped out of college.*

*I received a special support that helped me through and continues to this day, her name is Nylia. Nylia is more than a pet, she is a survivor, she is a savior, she is my best friend. I look at her and see in Pals 4 Change an opportunity to share this emotion and support with others.*

*I became what I wanted to see in this world, a place free from judgement where we can own our experiences and problems and share to help others. We live in world where competition is everywhere, and any sign of weakness is the death of you, but I believe the opposite, I believe sharing pain and struggles is a sign of strength to move forward.*



## **Tiphereth Banks** **Project Sauti**

*My name is Tiphereth Banks aka Het-Heru, a Community Fellow at the West Center. I am the mother of a 2 year old boy.*

*Born and raised in the Bay Area, I graduated from Oakland High School in 2012, and am currently a student at Berkeley City College. At an early age, I developed a strong passion for art. My artwork has been displayed in art shows and exhibitions. Starting in 2007, I have worked on mural projects. While working at an art based youth training program as a junior artist, from the years 2011 - 2013, I discovered another passion: to help teach & support the youth of the urban community. I aspire to successfully create an enterprise that benefits the community.*

*At the Heart of Richmond Event, I offered a Contour Drawing class for children, so that they could learn that art is not about perfection, and that everyone is an artist. My goal is to through **Project Sauti** is to offer more art classes to urban youth, as a channel for self-expression.*



# About the Fellows

**Carmen Alejo**  
**Project Active Parents, Healthy Children**



*My name is Carmen Alejo and I am a Community Fellow at the West Family Justice Center.*

*Originally from Mexico, I am a mother of two children, 15 and 9 years old, both A-students. We are a family that believes that through education we can make change in the community. I am a graduate of the the Latina*

*Center's Leadership program. I also received training on positive parenting and have served as Parent Educator. I have in training in mental health through NAMI and also Mental Health First Aid for Youth. Currently, I'm working for the Contra Costa School District School at JO Ford School.*

*With great sadness I realized my Latinx community does not talk openly about about mental illness and are very afraid of being criticized or even rejected for this reason.*

*A personal experience led me to organize a support group called "**Active Parents Healthy Children**" with the help of an expert psychologist to give an opportunity to parents to talk about the challenges of having a family member diagnosed with a mental illness. I will be offering this workshop at the West Center in January 2018.*

*Thanks to the Family Justice Center for the opportunity to continue to develop as a Community Fellow, a very large professional and personal growth path. Being a community leader is not always easy but when you have people and organizations like this is worth the effort.*

**Adriana Martinez**  
**Project Let's Make a Change**

*My name is Adriana Martinez, I am a Community Fellow at the West Center. I was born in Guadalajara Mexico. I have 2 wonderful children, Andrew and Ariel and a husband named Hector. I work at The Latina Center in a program called Our children first. Through this program, I teach parenting classes, with an emphasis on suicide prevention in teens. I like to help people in any way I can*

*Project **Let's Make a Change** is a workshop for Latino parents about bullying. This topic is important to me because my son was bullied in 2nd grade. Through that experience, we learned a valuable lesson about the child who was being abusive, which gave us a different perspective on the situation. I want to pass this knowledge through my workshops. I first introduced this workshop to parents at the Coronado School in October as part of Bullying Awareness Month. I will also be presenting the workshop at two other schools in December, and am collaborating with the Vice Principal of my son's school to continue this work next year.*



# About the Fellows

## **Cynthia Altamirano** **Community Fellow Alum '16**

*My name is Cynthia Kay Daniels Altamirano and I am a Community Fellow Alum at the Central Center.*



*As a single parent of three sons in the 1970's, I encountered the need for family and community support.*

*I have a vision of faith organizations with the resources necessary to move from intention into action in service of a wider community. My goal is to help churches and faith communities understand, accept, and activate their abilities to lift up children and families within existing community and social programs.*

*Last year, as my project, I organized the first annual Backpack Drive at the Concord Center, in partnership with the Cornerstone Fellowship. We held the Backpack Drive this year again, and all the 2017 Central Fellows all participated in the preparation and distribution of backpacks.*

*This year, I have also had the opportunity to participate in the 2017 Community Fellows program by offering the Fellows a Digital Literacy class as part of their initial training.*

*In April, I attended the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Justice Conference in Wisconsin as part of the Contra Costa Family Justice Center team.*

## **Shani Miranda** **Project Oya Defense Training**

*My name is Shani Miranda. I am a Community Fellow at the West Family Justice Center. I am a mother of two loving kids, Lea age 7 and Hasani age 6. I am currently working at Rubicon as an ambassador.*

*Rubicon is a nonprofit that provides pathways for participants to develop the economic mobility to move out of poverty. Rubicon believes that success comes from participation and achievement in four areas: Assets, Income, Wellness, and Connections. The goal for my project, **Oya Defense Training**, is to bring women together who have been victims of a violent crime, and build a sisterhood, to move away from isolation.*

*My project is designed to empower, build confidence, and train the mind and body to protect itself when facing possible danger. Women who are interested in helping prevent sexual assault are also welcomed and encouraged to attend.*



*I believe that all of us have the ability to look out for each other's safety. My hope is for my project to create a safe space for women to talk, connect, and heal together.*

# About the Fellows

## **Kayla Lopez** **Transitioning Foster Youth 101**

*My name is Kayla Lopez and I am a Community Fellow at the Central Center, graduate of John F. Kennedy University, and former foster youth of Contra Costa County in California. I desire to pursue my passion in community service and reform of primary issues in my county, state, and country.*



*I have been a Contra Costa County resident all my life. As a youth, I have been a victim of various forms of domestic violence and abuse in the home and within unhealthy relationships with others. As a victim, I wanted to join the movement to help make a change or difference in my community. I was referred to the Family Justice Center's Community Fellow program because I showed a strong interest in addressing the need of reform with domestic violence.*

*I was provided the opportunity and support to develop a project that would be able to address the needs of a focus population of victims in my community: foster youth. I wanted to help victims use their struggles to manifest their skills and capabilities and develop resiliency. I hope that my efforts to establish myself in my community as a leader can help make the waves needed to push for change and reform. I have had so much love and support along my journey and I aspire to pay it forward to those in need.*

*In January 2018, I will be joining the Youth Training Project, training social workers nationwide on outreach strategies to reach transitioning foster youth.*

## **Teresita de Jesus Escobedo** **Project Voices of Emerald Park**

*My name is Teresita Escobedo, a Community Fellow at the Concord Center. Growing up in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico increased my abilities to stand up against violence and justice. I was part of a group of feminist activists in Casa Amiga Center, and also belonged to a social justice movement named "Ni Una Mas," created to raise awareness regarding the exploitation and dehumanization of women in Juárez. Currently, I'm pursuing an Associate in Science Degree in Early Childhood Education at Los Medanos College. Meaningful practices in early childhood education awakened me to the environmental factors that affect the learning experiences of children, families, and communities. My observations as Office Assistant at Emerald Park inspired me to offer residents a way to participate in the wellbeing of their environment by engaging their voices in the creation and administration of a survey, which revealed their needs in order of priority.*

*As part of my Fellowship, I also offered a presentation at Los Medanos about the Family Justice Center, and assisted the Center's monthly Project Connect meetings*

*My son recently graduated from high school, and is studying to be a paramedic. He encourages me to stay strong and keep going.*



# About the Fellows

