

Advocacy | DEI

#HERSTORY: HERE FOR GOOD

THE IMMIGRANT PORTRAIT PROJECT



Celebrating our Immigrants

At Women of Toledo, we take pride in the diversity of women and youth that we serve and continue to find ways not only to elevate but also to highlight and celebrate their cultural heritage. Women of Toledo aims to strengthen our neighborhoods and community through the appreciation of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity to encourage an inclusive and peaceful society.

Partnering with a photographer, Jennifer Bak at J.Bak Studio, we organized the #HerStory campaign, in which a compile of stories and portraits of local immigrant women who have made a difference. Together, we will raise awareness of the vital role that immigrants, refugees, and diverse populations have played in building a strong and successful community and nation.

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Cordula Mora

Germany

Cordula Mora is from München, Germany. She immigrated to the U.S. in 2002 to conduct neuroscience. Cordula's family remains in Germany and misses the good flavorful food from there that is not high in fat, salt, or sugar. What she loves the most about the U.S. are its national parks.

Since Cordula has lived in Germany, New Zealand, and the U.S., she has found a great appreciation for each place and what each has to offer. When Cordula initially arrived in North Carolina, she had friendly colleagues at the University who helped her transition to the U.S. She loves to travel across the U.S. and learn about the uniqueness of each state.

Eleanor Killam

China

Eleanor Killam was born in Hong Kong, China. Her parents had moved to China from Shanghai during the Communist Revolution. She and her parents left Hong Kong when she was four years old to move to São Paulo, Brazil. They took a ship to Brazil, which took 30 days. When Eleanor turned 11, she moved to San Francisco with her parents to join her grandparents. She attended a Catholic middle school which made things initially difficult. Eleanor and her brother were the only Chinese and Asian students at the school.

Eleanor went on to pursue higher education, where she studied nursing and business. In 1996, after she married her husband and her son was born, she moved to Toledo, OH. Eleanor misses the Cantonese and regional Chinese food, which were readily available in San Francisco, and returns there occasionally to get a taste of home. Eleanor is grateful for her friends and relatives in Toledo and San Francisco and enjoys their company whenever possible in her retirement.



Nutan Dixit

India

Nutan Dixit is from Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. She came to live in the United States in 2000 permanently. Nutan decided to move to further her studies after getting her master's in psychology. She graduated from Forsyth Technical Community College, where she studied general occupation technology. Nutan had a lot of fun adventures here in the U.S.

When she got married and had kids, she felt it was challenging to raise them without her family around. She misses the food in India and, of course, her family. Nutan loves the diversity of the U.S., traveling, meeting new friends, and learning about other cultures. She is happy and proud to be a citizen of the U.S., but she misses her motherland, India. Nutan hopes to be the best version of herself in the future and to get a degree in mental health counseling.

Olga Rubalcava

Mexico

Olga Rubalcava is from Jalisco, Mexico. She left her home to move to the United States in June of 2002 because her husband (now ex-husband) wanted to. She left her entire family in Mexico except for her sister and brother, who had moved to the U.S. previously. She misses the rest of her family dearly.

Olga immigrated to the U.S. by crossing the river that separates Texas and Mexico on foot. Since making that difficult journey, Olga appreciates the opportunities available for herself and her family in the United States. Olga hopes her children become successful in their future careers and choices.



Karen Okunta

Nicaragua

Karen Okunta is from Nicaragua. She first came to the United States in 1978 to attend college while her family remained in Nicaragua. Karen misses the food and the beaches in Nicaragua.

Karen loves the democratic system in the United States. She has found in both homes that the people are very kind. She has enjoyed getting to travel across the country.

Karen believes in embracing one's migration experience. She loves that she got to connect with other immigrants and learn about their countries and cultures. She hopes that we all return to a strong sense of community here.

Lana Tabbalat

Jordan

Lana Tabbalat is originally from Amman, Jordan. Lana first came to the United States in 1998 after she got married to her husband. Her husband helped her when during her transition to the United States. Lana found the language barrier to be her initial challenge. Ever since moving away, her family has been what she misses most from Jordan.

Lana appreciates that she has the freedom and opportunity to be an active and contributing citizen in the United States. She has not found many similarities between Jordan and the United States but likes how unique each culture is.

She is grateful for all the opportunities offered to her in the United States that have allowed her to build herself into the strong woman she is today. In the future, Lana hopes to give back to the community that helped and supported her.



Poonam Saini

India

Poonam Saini moved to the United States from India in 2002 after she got married. Poonam has been working in the IT field since she first arrived and is now the IT Manager at Paramount Healthcare. She appreciates the better quality of life in the United States but misses her family and India.

In 2010, Poonam got involved in the Indian community by choreographing dances. She has been formally learning Kathak dance from a teacher in India, which she thinks has helped her tremendously continue the path of learning. After teaching dance for more than 12 years to kids and adults, Poonam feels she has more things to offer. Her mission is to share the love of Indian dance with people around me and showcase the rich culture of India through its dances.

Poonam found a lot of opportunities to volunteer and give back to the community, like volunteering at the Hindu Temple of Toledo, becoming an active motivator for a healthy lifestyle program, and helping community members in need. She has found her happy place, and even though she wants to visit India, she feels that she also belongs in this country.



Awilda Almanzar

Dominican Republic



Dhawi Pienta

Indonesia



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Irina Aribas

Indonesia

*We're glad
you're here
to stay!*



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Indo-Phillipines



Nailya Weber
Kazakhstan



Ana Snyder
Venezuela



Ruth Zajac
Ireland



Program Organizer

Women of Toledo: Established in 2014, Inclusive for Women Inc. - Women of Toledo is a 501c3 nonprofit organization serving the Greater Toledo community that advocates for diversity and inclusion with a focus on economic empowerment. The organization offers programs and services that help tackle issues critical to women's economic advancement and interrupt various biases in the workplace, marketplace, community, and family.

Learn more at www.womenoftoledo.org

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Presenters:



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Thank You!

On behalf of our Circle of Friends, Supporters, Board of Directors, Partners, Volunteers, women, and young women at Women of Toledo, we would like to thank all of you for attending this program. Please know that your support truly offers hope to all women and youth that our organization will continue to serve by acknowledging, celebrating, and honoring their presence and value in our community.

Program Team

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