

Healthy Communities:
Promoting Wellness and Achieving Health and Mental Health Equity
a Social Determinants of Health series
May 2, 2018

Speaker Biographies



William Jahmal Miller is the Director of Corporate Reputation and Thought Leadership for Blue Shield of California. Jahmal has extensive experience in health care and as a people leader, most recently serving as the Deputy Director of the Office of Health Equity for the California Department of Public Health. Jahmal has been recognized with several industry honors, including being named a “Top 40 under 40” awardee by the Sacramento Business Journal, “Top 100 under 50” awardee by Diversity MBA, and a Modern Healthcare Up & Comers awardee. He was recently appointed to the American Diabetes Association’s National Health Disparities Committee and is an active contributor to Landmark Ventures’ Social Innovation Summit. Jahmal earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Columbia University and a Master of Health Administration from the University of Southern California. He was also conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by Western University of Health Sciences in 2016.



Rigoberto Vargas is the Director of Ventura County Public Health. He has extensive experience developing and managing a variety of public health programs. He has been with the Ventura County Health Care Agency for almost 20 years holding a variety of positions in the Public Health department and as Director for 5 years. He oversees the many programs and services of the department that protect the health and safety, prevent disease and promote wellness. The department’s diverse workforce is comprised of more than 325 dedicated public health professionals. Rigoberto holds a Bachelor’s Degree from UCSB and a Master’s Degree in Public Health from SDSU.



Manal J. Aboelata, Managing Director at Prevention Institute. Manal works collaboratively to improve access to healthy foods, prevent injuries, and increase access to physical activity opportunities. Her work emphasizes policy and community-based approaches, and demonstrates an overarching commitment to working with under-resourced communities to foster health and safety. Manal coordinates the Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments and she chairs the Joint Use Statewide Taskforce (JUST), whose mission is to increase community access to playgrounds through the policy of joint use agreements between school districts and local governments. Manal is principal author of *The Built Environment and Health: 11 Profiles of Neighborhood Transformation*, as well as several other articles related to the Built Environment including *Safety in 3 California-Wide Initiatives*, which was recently published in the *American Journal of Public Health*. Prior to joining Prevention Institute in 1998, Manal received her MPH in Epidemiology from UCLA, where she was inducted into the Iota Chapter of the Delta Omega Honorary Society in 2001 and into the UCLA School of Public Health Alumni Hall of Fame in 2009.

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Nancy Halpern Ibrahim celebrates nearly 23 years with Esperanza Community Housing and has served as Executive Director since 2006. Nancy was recruited in 1995 based on her experience developing community health leadership with women in Palestine, and later, after earning her Master of Public Health from UCLA, with the deaf community in Damascus, Syria. Cognizant of the similarities between South Los Angeles and life under occupation, she joined Esperanza's staff as inaugural Director of Health Programs. She developed the model community health leadership program, Promotores de Salud, which led to the first class of Esperanza's Community Health Promoters graduating from the program in 1996. By July 2018 this program will have graduated 515 bi-lingual women and men. As Director of Health Programs, she established the framework for the programs at the intersection of health and housing that characterize much of Esperanza's work. Her efforts have been central to pioneering environmental health strategies in the region, and to advancing the reputation of Mercado La Paloma, Esperanza's economic development venue, as a cultural and culinary hub. As Executive Director, Nancy is committed to principles of responsible, inclusive development without displacement, and the stabilization of communities strongly rooted in health and human rights. She leads a staff of 30, addressing five major program areas: Affordable Housing, Health, Environmental Justice, Economic Development, and Art and Culture.



R. Bong Vergara is an Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Social Change and Innovation at USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, Los Angeles, CA. Mr. Vergara works with VCBH and provides prevention planning, training and research support for addressing racial and ethnic disparities related to substance use risk. He is currently the co-chair of the California Mental Health Services Act Multicultural Coalition (CMMC), an alliance of mental health advocates, united toward the integration of cultural and linguistic competence in the public mental health system. CMMC promotes the successful implementation of the California Reducing Disparities Project (CRDP), the only project of its kind in the United States focused on promoting system- and practice-level change in mental health service delivery. He has published a number of policy briefs and agency reports on poverty, community health and community engagement. He has also presented briefings before a number of national convenings, hearings and conferences, including the Subcommittee on Populations of the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics. He has a MSW, Social Welfare, MA, Asian American Studies, and BA, Asian American Studies, University of California, Los Angeles

Thank you for your participation from the planning team.

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