

# The Immigrant and Refugee AmeriCorps Program (IRAP)



COALITION OF AFRICAN, ARAB, ASIAN,  
EUROPEAN & LATINO IMMIGRANTS  
OF ILLINOIS  
**CAAELII**  
...Sharing a Vision



## STATEMENT OF VALUES

Our Immigrant and Refugee  
AmeriCorps Program is committed  
to serve the community and involve  
those served in the process.



The Immigrant and Refugee  
AmeriCorps Program is committed  
to making community service part  
of our daily lives.

## AmeriCorps Members

### **Francisco Ramos** Executive Director At CAAAELII



Mr. Ramos has been working as a community organizer, and as a senior manager of nonprofit organizations, since the mid 1980 's, both in the Greater Boston area and in the Chicago metropolitan area. Mr. Ramos has been instrumental in the founding of several community-based organizations in Chicago, some of which continue to be active after 18 years of service.

Mr. Ramos has been a Human Rights educator since the late 1990 's and has organized several Human Rights community based initiatives through the years. Mr. Ramos has extensive experience working as an advocate for immigrant and minority communities on different specific issues, such as fair and affordable housing, immigration rights, tenant rights, worker and

labor rights, among others.

Mr. Ramos has had an opportunity to work with large state-wide immigrant coalitions and with multi-issue neighborhood based organizations during his career. Mr. Ramos has also had an opportunity to work across geographical, income and ethnic boundaries during his career.

Mr. Ramos is currently the Executive Director of the Coalition of African, Arab, Asian, European and Latino Immigrants of Illinois (CAAAELII).

Mr. Ramos holds a Bachelors of Science in Business Administration, and is currently completing a Masters Degree in Theological Studies at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois.



### **Sonya De La Torre** LeaderCorps and Volunteer Coordinator At CAAAELII



Ms. De La Torre is from Chicago, Ill. She started her first year of service with AmeriCorps in August.

Ms. De La Torre loves working in non-profit organizations because she likes to help people. When she was in High School she did her community service at Gads Hill Center, a non-profit organization in Pilsen, Chicago.

This summer she worked at Erie Neighborhood House as a Supervisor and is now working at Onward Neighborhood House teaching computer classes to adults.

Ms. De La Torre now works with the Coalition of African, Arab, Asian,

European and Latinos immigrants of Illinois (CAAAELII) as Volunteer Coordinator, recruiting, deploying and supporting volunteers. Starting in January 2010 Ms. De La Torre began helping her community and working for her seventh year as a tax professional with H&R Block.

Ms. De La Torre graduated in 2008 with a Bachelors Degree in Computer Science and a Minor in Mathematics at Northeastern IL University.

Ms. De La Torre plans to go back to school for a Masters Degree in Computer Graphics.

## AmeriCorps Members

**Alexandra Hill**  
AmeriCorps Member at  
Ethiopian Community



Ms. Hill is the Volunteer Coordinator at the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago and an AmeriCorps Member.

Ms. Hill is originally from San Diego, California and graduated from Loyola University with a degree in International Studies and Anthropology.

Ms. Hill is committed to social justice issues, and in the future would like to pursue projects that make a positive impact on human rights.

Ms. Hill hobbies include dance, travel, foreign language, and cooking.



**Shyam Shrestha**  
AmeriCorps Member at  
Nepalese American Society



Mr. Shrestha got his US visa in 2003 under the diversity visa program. He decided to migrate and came to the US in October 2003. Mr. Shrestha was born in Nepal and is currently living in Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Shrestha envisions a culturally rich society with peace, solidarity and harmony. He started organizing the Nepali immigrant community to provide assistance to the Nepali speaking Bhutanese refugees. Mr. Shrestha didn't stop his activities within the Nepali community after achieving his goals.

Mr. Shrestha was especially interested in the field of NGO management and intercultural management, and luckily his family encouraged him with those interests. That encouragement drove him to excel. He earned his Master degree in Education in Nepal, and a degree in International and Intercultural Management, focused on NGO Management, from the Graduate Institute School of International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

Mr. Shrestha gained a wide range of experiences working with the community while he was in Nepal working in the Ministry of Health as a Family Planning and Public Health officer for 20 years, and as an NGO activist and a professional for 8 years. He joined the Secretary of State Asian Pacific Advisory Council of Illinois in 2004, and CAAAELII (Coalition of Asian, Arab, African European, and Latino Immigrants of Illinois) in 2008 as a membership council member representing the Nepalese American Society. Mr. Shrestha joined AmeriCorps as a member to work with the Immigrant and refugee communities last August 2009. He is the founder and president of the Nepalese American Society. Mr. Shrestha received an award by the Secretary of State of Illinois in 2008 for his dedication and contribution to the Asian American communities.

These days he is encouraging young people to be catalysts for social change.

**Adeola Ogunsanya**  
AmeriCorps Member at  
Muslim Women Resource  
Center



Ms. Ogunsanya is a second generation Nigerian woman and comes from a family of five. She grew up in the Uptown Area of Chicago ( a round people of many ethnicities ) and loves diversity. Though she was born in the U.S., she has not gotten use to the cold and would rather have Nigerian weather.

Ms. Ogunsanya has her Bachelor Degree in Nursing, but ended up in the Social Work field. She is a teacher and counselor at heart and loves to encourage others.

Her other loves include: Jesus, people, good food, good sleep, and traveling.

Ms. Ogunsanya also enjoys salsa, and exercise. Her goal is to give nothing less than her best in life.

## AmeriCorps Members

### Dena Lee

AmeriCorps Member at  
Korean American Resource  
& Cultural Center



Ms. Lee is a freshman at Wright College.

Ms. Lee was born in Chicago, but when she was a little baby her parents brought her back to South Korea. She immigrated back to Chicago with her family three years ago.

Ms. Lee is studying art design. She likes drawing and painting and she likes to listen to music.

Ms. Lee is working at Korean American Resource and Cultural Center (KRCC) as part of the AmeriCorps Program.

Ms. Lee is a member of Building Sister Hood

( BSH ), a women empowerment program. She always has fun when she is working with her friends at home and at KRCC.



### German Leguizamón

AmeriCorps Member at  
Centro Romero



Mr. Leguizamón emigrated to this country two years ago, and it has been very difficult for him to live here because the language prevents him from contacting people and getting a job that relates to his professional studies, but he hopes to keep learning to live better as he has done so far. He comes from Colombia, where he lived the greater part of his life.

Mr. Leguizamón always demonstrates his joy and enthusiasm for life. He worked for several companies in Colombia for many years of his life, and one day he decided to come to the US, where he believed he would find better opportunities than the ones he had in Colombia, but found out that in this country there are also large numbers of

unemployed, so he has had to do jobs that perhaps he was never willing to do in his country.

Thanks to his native language he has provided assistance to those who are in the same situation as him.

Mr. Leguizamón has always looked ahead and says that the past is gone and does not change anyone, no one knows what the future will be, so the present is what we need to live. Therefore, every day he thank God for another day and tries to use it and enjoy it at the max with all the people around him.

He would like to go back to his country one of these days with the new knowledge and experience that he has acquired in a country so different from his.

### Jesus Carlin

AmeriCorps Member at  
Centro Sin Fronteras



Mr. Carlin was born and raised in the Southwest side of Chicago in a predominantly Mexican neighborhood known as Little Village. He first started working with Centro Sin Fronteras when he was 18. For the past 5 yrs he has volunteered and worked with Centro Sin Fronteras on many initiatives, such as El Zocalo Urbano (youth center), citizenship workshops, health workshops, etc. In working with Centro Sin Fronteras and El Zocalo Urbano he learned many organizing skills that helped him become a leader amongst young people.

El Zocalo Urbano collective held many shows and events throughout the past 5 years. For the past two years he helped organize the "Little Village Youth Forum" by hosting a workshop the first year and a hip hop mixtape

( " Law and Disorder: The Village Chronicles " ) the second year. The forum focuses on violence prevention and presents alternatives to joining street gangs through discussions in workshops ran by youth for youth. This year he will also help out with the Forum 's mixtape project as well as another mixtape project for the El Zocalo Urbano ( " Ready 4 War Pt. 2 " ).

Mr. Carlin has completed his Associate Degree in Arts degree at Harold Washington College. He plans to attend Columbia College in the fall to obtain his Bachelors Degree in Audio Engineering. His dream is to own and run his own record label with friends he grew up with who are now his business partners.

## AmeriCorps Members

**Hilda Villatoro**  
**AmeriCorps Member at**  
**Korean American Community**  
**Services**



Ms. Villatoro, also known as Betty, became a mother at age 17. She then came to Chicago where life offered her a great future. She went back to Guatemala soon after, where she is from, and her future became frustrated because she had two more children by the time she was 21.

Ms. Villatoro was always looking for a way to continue to study. She took free classes for positions like receptionist, secretary, social worker, etc. This helped her to feel strong to help her children to grow up with good ideals and goals.

Ms. Villatoro has been involved with the Guatemala community for six years. She has worked as a social worker and as teacher assistant with students that

have Down syndrome. With this experience she has felt more energized to help the community.

In 2005 Ms. Villatoro came back to Chicago. She started looking for work opportunities with the community based on her experience. She started to work at Centro San Bonifacio. She also involved her daughter with some activities while she was starting high school.

Ms. Villatoro finally found four appropriate places to work in the community: Centro San Bonifacio, Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, the AmeriCorps Program and Korean American Community Services. She says that the last opportunity listed is something that came to her as a gift from God.

**Kay Rachel Amancio**  
**AmeriCorps Member at**  
**Lao American Community**  
**Services**



Ms. Amancio was born in Chicago. She is a Filipino American and has a wonderful family that supports her.

Ms. Amancio goes to college because she want to help out her family as soon as she gets her Bachelor Degree.

Ms. Amancio gets along with other people. She is usually shy and quiet when she meets new people, but once you get to know her she is very loud and talkative.

Ms. Amancio also loves to have fun in her life. She

always says that life is short. She wants to live the happiest she can be.

Ms. Amancio is grateful because she is in the AmeriCorps program. It is her first time in this program and so far she likes it. She is working at Lao American Community Services.



**Kwame Freeman**  
**AmeriCorps Member at**  
**Chinese Mutual Aid**  
**Association**



Mr. Freeman finished High School in 2009, now he is taking a one year break before going to College.

Mr. Freeman is a lifeguard during the summer time. He likes to swim, cook and watch old horror films.

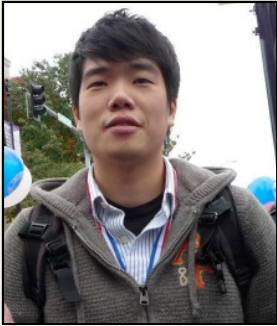
Mr. Freeman is a good guitar player and also plays the drums, two of his hobbies.

Mr. Freeman is currently working through CAAAELII in the Multicultural Youth Project (MCYP) at the Chinese Mutual Aid Association (CMAA). Mr. Freeman has been a part of that geographical community since he was a child.

Mr. Freeman enjoys working with the youth in the community because he can identify himself with the participants.

## AmeriCorps Members

**Wallek Kuan**  
AmeriCorps Member at  
Chinese American Service



Mr. Kuan, also known as Alex, is currently a student at Northeastern Illinois University.

Mr. Kuan likes to play basketball, swimming and listening to all kinds of music. He has good skills in typing and with communications.

Mr. Kuan is working at Chinese American Service League (CASL) located in Chinatown, Chicago IL. This is the first time that he is a member of AmeriCorps.



**Heather Dean**  
AmeriCorps Member at  
Indo American Center



Ms. Dean is secretly pretentious beyond reason. She moved to Chicago four years ago to go to college and learn to do comedy improvisation.

Ms. Dean is pursuing her Bachelor Degree in Community Health and Wellness at Northeastern Illinois University and she is expecting to graduate this coming fall. She is very active on campus, and was president of her school's GLBTA for three years.

Ms. Dean is adventurous and entertaining. She likes to be spontaneous and loves to make people

laugh. She likes to meet new people and find interesting things to do.

Ms. Dean is currently working through CAAAEELII as the Assistant Youth Program Coordinator at the Indo-American Center in Chicago.

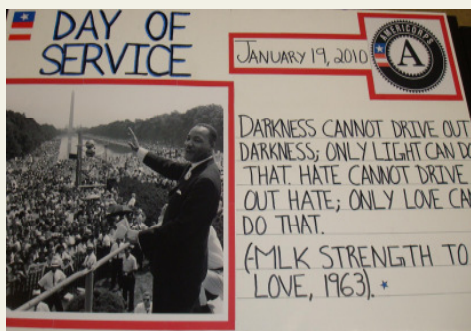
She enjoys working with the your program. She states that the kids are energetic, interesting and keeps her on her toes. She had been in the position for two months and there is still so much that she wants to do.

**Kristina Tildilla**  
AmeriCorps Member at  
Alliance of Filipinos for  
Immigrant Rights and  
Empowerment

Ms. Tildilla is currently working with the Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment (AFIRE).

Ms. Tildilla has just started working with AFIRE and she is enjoying it. This is the first time that she is a member of AmeriCorps.

## Martin Luther King, Jr. National Day of Service 2010



Before the event the AmeriCorps members worked on this poster.

January 19, 2010

### The Vietnamese Association of Illinois Chicago, IL

We opened with opening remarks by Francisco Ramos, Executive Director of the Coalition of African, Arab, Asian, European and Latino Immigrants of Illinois (CAAELII).



Sonya De La Torre, a LeaderCorps Member introduce the AmeriCorps Members to the audience.



Kwame J. Freeman, an AmeriCorps Member at the Chinese Mutual Aid Association, talking on how Dr. King 's testimony relates to him.

Our program included the following presentations:

- Individual AmeriCorps Members, presented how Dr. Martin Luther King 's testimony relates to them.
- The audience joined the AmeriCorps Members in singing We Shall Not Be Moved and Stand By Me.
- Still Point Theatre Collective performed a theatrical piece about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr 's life.
- Arley Otalvaro - played two Spanish songs on acoustic guitar called: *Chore2* from Hector Villalobos (Brasil ) and *El Bunde Tolimense* from Alberto Castilla ( Colombia ).



The AmeriCorps Members sang the songs We Shall Not Be Moved and Stand By Me.



Shyam Shrestha, an AmeriCorps Member at the Nepalese American Society, talking on how Dr. King 's testimony relates to him.



Still Point Theatre Collective



Arley Otalvaro

# Martin Luther King, Jr. National Day of Service 2010



**Kwame J. Freeman and Alexandra Hill,  
AmeriCorps Members restocking food**

## Lakeview Pantry

January 20, 2010  
at The Lake View Pantry  
Chicago, IL

We were so excited to help the community. Therefore we volunteered at Lakeview Pantry.

We helped restocking food, repacking bulk foods, sorting clothing and unloading weekly deliveries from the Greater Chicago Food Depository.



**AmeriCorps members working together**



**Alexandra Hill, Hilda Villatoro and Sonya De La Torre  
AmeriCorps members organizing the food delivery**



**Kwame J. Freeman and Alexandra Hill,  
AmeriCorps Members restocking food**



**Alexandra Hill AmeriCorps members  
unpacking cans**



**Uploading delivery**



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**Hilda Villatoro AmeriCorps members  
unpacking cans**

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