

3RD ANNUAL

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

TRIBUTE

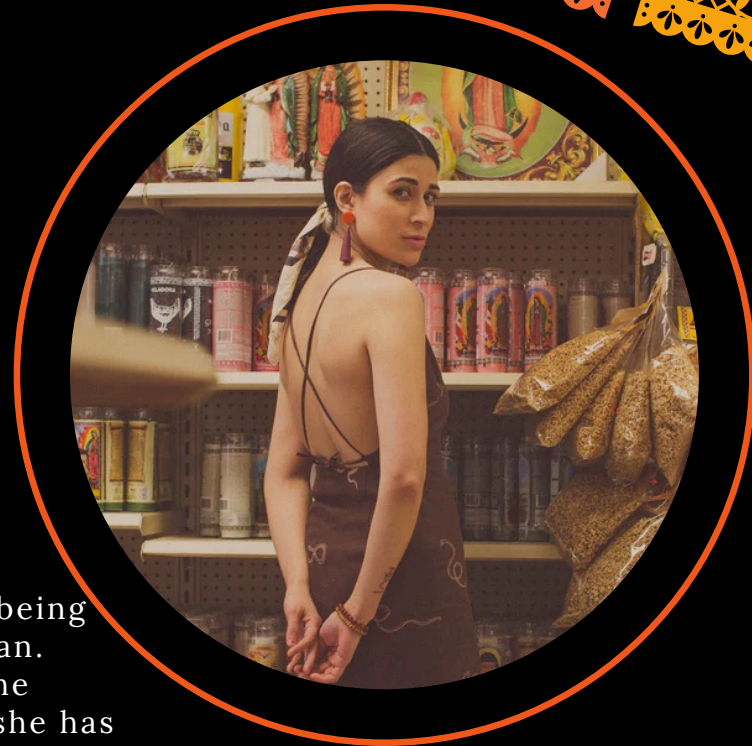
Designer/Artist

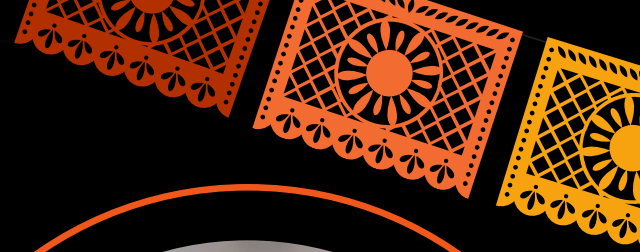
LAURA RODRIGUEZ

LAURA RODRIGUEZ is a native of Guadalajara, Mexico. After being taught to sew at an early age, Laura's passion for fashion began. Laura migrated to the United States at age 14 and by age 18 she participated in her first fashion show. Throughout the years she has been part of over 10 Fashions and show cases such as; "Accidental Industry Fashion Show," "The New Boho at the Ingersoll Theater," and "Sin Documentos fashion show," at the former Social Club in Des Moines. Laura has been featured in several Spanish and English magazines like Hola America, DSM Magazine and during the presidential campaign by Vogue on how the Latino vote is impacting Iowa. Laura is also the host of her own Podcast "Undocumented Momhood" on the Amplified platform.

Like many artists Laura Rodriguez has evolved. Her Mexican roots and her unwavering passion for the environment are the core of her current inspirations. This has led her to be part of the revolution of the fashion industry and how it impacts young people and the planet. Her unique style and technique of modernizing folkloric pieces to thrifting vintage clothing as a life style, to diving deeper and deeper into the ancestors of the Aztecs, Mayans and the Native people of Latin America will be showcased in her most recent work.

As mother, a small business owner, a fashion designer and a local activist, Laura can be found in many different platforms doing what she loves, at the time she is doing it, so if you ask her what she is ... it all depends in the time and place.





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Artist

LUIS NAVA

LUIS NAVA has a deep passion for art and technology and is currently a senior at Iowa State University majoring in graphic design.

Luis's love for art extends to the medium of photography, which he employs as a means of self-expression and a tool to capture the beauty he sees in the world around him. One of the defining aspects of his identity and source of pride is his heritage as the son of an immigrant from Mexico, and this is reflective throughout his artworks.



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Speaker

PAULINE MUHIKIRA

PAULINE MUHIKIRA is a dedicated Community Outreach Coordinator and Multilingual advocate at Nisaa African Family Services, an organization located in Iowa that provides support to victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault within African communities. Her unique background and skills make her a valuable asset in serving these communities.

Pauline's upbringing in the Democratic Republic of Congo, although originally from the Rwandese community, has given her a deep understanding of the challenges and cultural nuances faced by African immigrants in the United States. Her ability to speak seven languages, including French, Kinyarwanda, Congo Swahili, Lingala, Kinyamulenge, and Kinyabwisha, demonstrates her commitment to effective communication and advocacy within diverse linguistic communities. Additionally, English is her eighth language, which further enhances her ability to connect with a wide range of individuals.

Her journey with Nisaa African Family Services began in July 2017 as an advocate, where she provided direct services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Over time, Pauline has transitioned into a role that emphasizes community outreach and education, allowing her to extend her impact beyond direct services. Before her work at Nisaa and her arrival in the United States in August 2016, Pauline gained experience in various fields, including as a Direct Support Professional for people with intellectual disabilities at Mosaic, a Human Resources Officer, and later as a Human Resources Manager in Rwanda. She holds a bachelor's degree in social sciences from Rwanda, demonstrating her commitment to academic and professional growth. Beyond her professional achievements, Pauline is a wife and mother of three children. In her free time, she enjoys dancing, walking, reading, and cooking. Her passion for supporting her community and advocating for those in need is evident in her role at Nisaa African Family Services, where she continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of survivors and their families.



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Speaker

HONORINE NDINIMANA

HONORINE NDINIMANA serves as the Direct Services Coordinator at Nisaa African Family Services, a nonprofit organization based in Iowa that supports victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and homicide within Iowa's African communities. Her journey in life has been characterized by a strong passion for helping those in need and advocating for vulnerable populations.

Born in Rwanda, often referred to as the "Land of a Thousand Hills," Honorine's upbringing and experiences have deeply influenced her commitment to humanitarian work. Her advocacy journey began in 2013, and she has since dedicated herself to making a positive impact on the lives of those who face adversity.

Honorine brings a wealth of experience to her role, having previously worked in child protection and emergency support in various refugee camps. Her academic background includes a bachelor's degree in clinical psychology, reflecting her dedication to understanding and addressing the psychological aspects of trauma and recovery.

Outside of her professional commitments, Honorine finds joy in exploring different cultures through travel, savoring new cuisines, immersing herself in the world of literature through books, and cherishing moments spent with her loved ones.



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Speaker

BLANCA GONZALEZ

BLANCA GONZALEZ'S life journey has taken her from the municipality of Palestina de los Altos in the department of Quezaltenango, Guatemala, to the United States. Her background is deeply rooted in her indigenous heritage, and her mother tongue is Mam. She has 14 siblings – eight brothers and six sisters.

Blanca's educational journey began at the village school when she was just 5 years old. She attended this school from grade one to nine, where she not only acquired academic knowledge but also developed proficiency in speaking Spanish. This educational experience served as a bridge between her culture and values.

In 2014, Blanca immigrated to the United States, accompanied by her oldest daughter. Her motivation for this move was to create a better future for her family, and she now has two daughters who serve as her driving force for success in her new country.





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Speaker

OLIVIAH WALKER



OLIVIAH WALKER (she/her) is a citizen of the Meskwaki Nation and a health and racial equity advocate. She is currently serving as the Health Equity Officer for Iowa Health and Human Services. Her experience includes management in tribal, city, and county government.

Her particular interests span the intersections of youth work, institutional change management, policy and advocacy, and workforce development. She regularly advocates and raises awareness for Missing & Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR)



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Speaker

JOURDAN REYNOLDS CHOI



JOURDAN REYNOLDS CHOI is a dedicated professional committed to victim services and advocacy. He is an adoptee from Seongnam, South Korea and grew up in Wisconsin before moving to Iowa in 2010.

In 2019, Jourdan embarked on a career path in victim services, marking the beginning of his impactful journey in this field. Over the years, he has held various roles, including victim advocate, finance manager, and operations manager, demonstrating his adaptability and dedication to the cause. Jourdan manages the Meskwaki Tribe's victim services program, R.I.S.E. (Restoring Indigenous Survivor Empowerment).

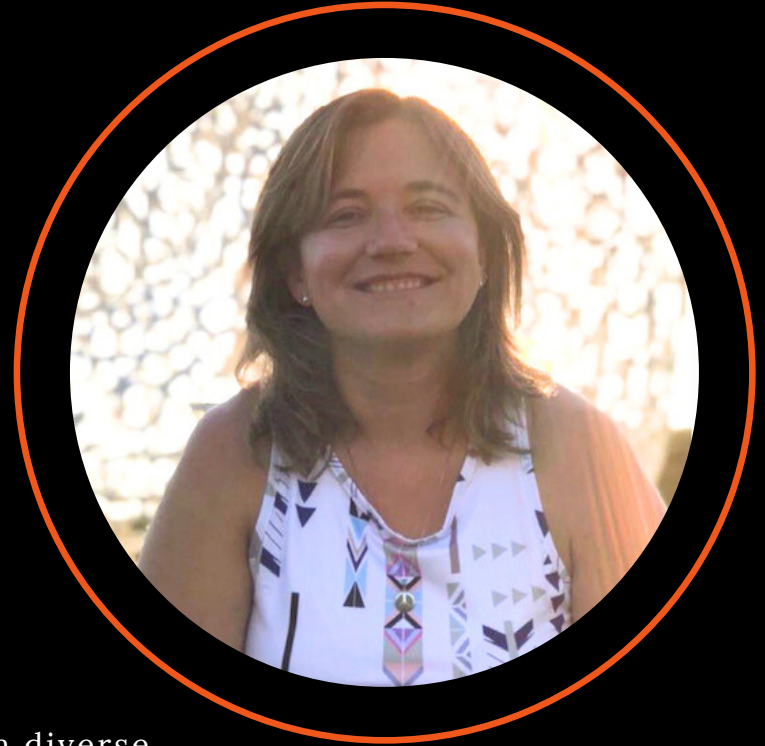
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Performer

SOL VARISCO-SANTINI



SOL VARISCO-SANTINI is a versatile professional with a diverse background, extensive experience in the nonprofit sector, and a passion for education and community service. Originally from Argentina, she is a teacher and Contract Manager for the Bureau of Refugee Services. Before this role, Sol served as the Poverty Reduction Director at Catholic Charities and Executive Director for Justice for Our Neighbors.

Outside of her professional work, Sol is deeply engaged in the community through her volunteer efforts with various nonprofit organizations in Des Moines. She also enjoys singing, dancing, and playing her guitar.

Sol's academic pursuits led her to Iowa State University, where she studied English and Spanish. Recently, she achieved certification as a Biodanza facilitator from the Los Angeles School of Biodanza, showcasing her ongoing pursuit of personal and professional growth in diverse fields.

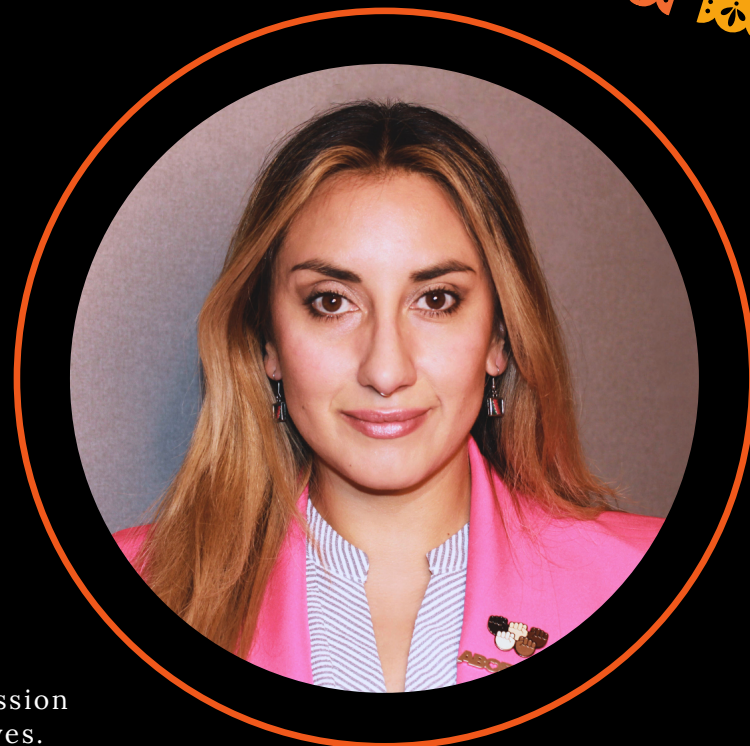
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Performer

GABRIELA FUENTES



GABRIELA FUENTES is a Bolivian-Chilean American with a deep passion for the performing arts and a commitment to improving people's lives. This commitment drove her to pursue her master's degree in the United States, where her research centered on the significance of performing arts in international NGO development projects.

Gabriela began performing at age 3 as a flamenco dancer. Over the years, she expanded her repertoire to include theater and contemporary dance, often working independently. Her dedication to the performing arts has taken her to stages both nationally and internationally. Notable venues include Ohio, Des Moines, and participation in various productions with groups such as the Des Moines Playhouse, Gateway Theater, and Ankeny Community Theater, among others.

In 2023, Gabriela received a nomination for the Cloris Awards in the category of Best Performance in a Lead Role in a Play, a testament to her talent and dedication to her craft. She has also been recognized for her outstanding contributions to the John Viars Theatre Play by the Des Moines Playhouse, where she received the Outstanding Adult Performance award. Additionally, her talents extend to the world of film, where she was honored with the Best Actress award for her role in the short film "Alone" produced by Duron Films. Currently, Gabriela works at Planned Parenthood, using her skills and passion to make a positive impact on people's lives. In addition to her professional endeavors, she continues to explore her artistic interests by learning pole dance and is always looking for opportunities to perform in the community.

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Live Music

SONTIERRA



SonTierra is a multinational, multi-ethnic, multi-generational ensemble comprised of Latinos and Latinas: Karin Stein (Colombian), Edgar East (Panamanian), Sol Varisco (Argentinean), Edgar Solís (Mexican), Valery Figueroa (Venezuelan), and Marián Vivas (Venezuelan). Their songs call for improving the world through climate change, and environmental stewardship, and they call for mutual tolerance and respect. The music also inspires hope and encourages people to take actions that will improve their lives.

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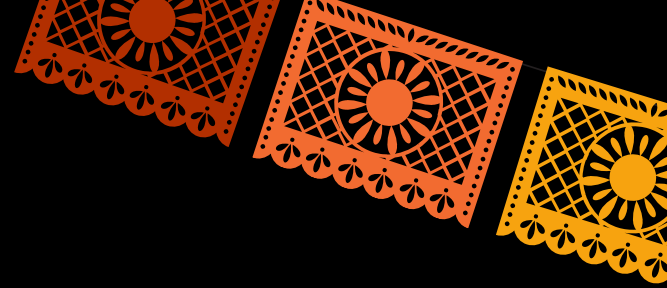
Live Performance

ESCARAMUZA CHARRA QUETZALLI

Escaramuza Charra Quetzalli is a Mexican, all-female drill team established in 2022 in Des Moines. The women are from diverse backgrounds and share a love for horses, charrería, and the goal to work together to compete across the Midwest and make it to nationals. Members of the group are from various parts of Iowa and work together to make their team wholesome. Their mission is to advance youth development through equestrian activities of athletic and cultural significance. Their dedication to the art of escaramuza charra also highlights a lesser-known but essential facet of Mexican culture and the charrería, which is recognized as Mexico's national sport.

Charrería has deep historical roots, originating from the traditions of herding and horsemanship in Mexico. While charros, the skilled male horsemen, are well-known symbols of Mexican culture, the equally impressive escaramuza charra event often remains in the shadows. The escaramuza charra is the only female event within charrería and showcases the incredible talent and bravery of women. In this captivating event, a team of eight riders performs daring and intricately choreographed maneuvers on horseback, all while riding sidesaddle.





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Featured Artist

OFRENDA/ALTAR

LATINOS IN ACTION

Latinos In Action is a class (elective) to help build Latino Leadership in their school and the community. Students lead different school activities to represent their cultures, working with a local elementary school to provide tutoring for ELL (English Language Learner) students at the elementary level to help them improve their ELPA scores.

Latinos in Action volunteers in the community to give back to their own community.