



23rd Annual Conference Program

¡Vivimos Aquí! - We Live Here!
***Exploring the Past & Reimagining the Future
of Our Changing Communities***

June 4 - June 6, 2025

**Co-hosted by the Cambio Center and Saint Louis University
St. Louis, Missouri**



Sponsored by:



University of Missouri

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As co-hosts, the Cambio Center at the University of Missouri-Columbia (MU) and the Center for Social Action at Saint Louis University (SLU) would like to thank all of our partners, sponsors, advisory board members, and all our Cambio fellows, friends, and volunteers who helped to make the 23rd Cambio de Colores possible!

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Cambio means change. The Cambio Center at the University of Missouri was founded in 2004 to lead research and outreach about Latin American populations, immigration, and integration in partnership with communities undergoing demographic change. To understand processes of integration and community change, the Center supports interdisciplinary **research** projects and a thriving network of Cambio Fellows, who come from fields as diverse as community development, economics, education, health, human development and family studies, history, language acquisition, law, and psychology. To ensure that research is useful to communities, the Center regularly facilitates **outreach** efforts, including community conversations, professional development, and the annual Cambio de Colores (Change of Colors) conference. In all of its work, the Cambio Center aims to develop a shared **community of practice** among academics and practitioners — researchers and community members — focused on building bridges and creating strong, integrated, caring communities. The Cambio Center advances this work both at the university and throughout the region by organizing the annual [Cambio de Colores conference](#), and through its network of [Cambio Fellows](#).

The Cambio Center and this conference aim to:

- Contribute to the University of Missouri’s mandate to provide education and enhance the welfare of all residents in our state in the context of the dramatic demographic changes that are resulting in dynamic, multicultural, and diverse societies.
- Develop a premier source of knowledge, scholarship, outreach, and education, to respond to the effects of globalization in local communities, both rural and urban, following the land-grant model.
- Support sustained research to understand the immigration process in Missouri in particular and the Midwest in general.
- Provide knowledge and best practices to facilitate a smooth integration of economically vulnerable newcomers to Missouri and the Midwest and prepare all citizens for a diverse society.
- Provide an institutional scholarly base to extend the Cambio de Colores initiative beyond the scope of the annual conferences, sustaining immigration-related research and outreach work of the university.
- Understand the international nature of the immigration process, particularly through study of the cultures, economies, and social institutions of Latin America.
- Collaborate internationally and develop the conditions for comparative studies of the push and pull immigration processes in the Americas, in collaboration with Latin American universities.
- Provide enhanced opportunities for global education and connections among our faculty, students, and communities.

23rd Annual Conference Program

¡Vivimos Aquí! - We Live Here!

Exploring the Past & Reimagining the Future of Our Changing Communities

This year, the theme for Cambio de Colores 2025 takes inspiration from the multi-media effort called “[We Live Here](#)” created by St. Louis Public Radio in 2015. At that time, the region was still reeling from the racial unrest that unfolded after the killing of two Black men by police in Ferguson and St. Louis City. In similar ways, today, the region and the nation continue to reel from anti-immigrant racism repeated not only by people in the streets, but also by people in power, by local and national leaders. And yet, **vivimos aquí**. We live and thrive here: immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Dominican Republicans, Colombians, Hondurans, Venezuelans, Peruvians, Brazilians, Guatemalans, Nicaraguans, Chileans, Haitians, Uruguayans, Paraguayans, Costa Ricans, Salvadorans, Cubans, Argentinians, Bolivians, Ecuadorans, Cubans, Belizeans, and Panamanians.

Our conference, therefore, focuses on telling the stories of exactly *how we live here*, alongside long-time residents. We will connect theory to practice as we consider community change and integration. We have welcomed proposals that explore the realities of migration – both the challenges and the joys: the legal battles faced, the health conditions that result, the communities that are developed, the economic challenges overcome, the histories we face, the education that is offered, and the beauty of youth and families growing together. Through these stories, our research and our practice, we aim to develop more positive discourse and ideas about how to support our changing communities.

The conference is organized into four main tracks that participants can follow based on their main interests:

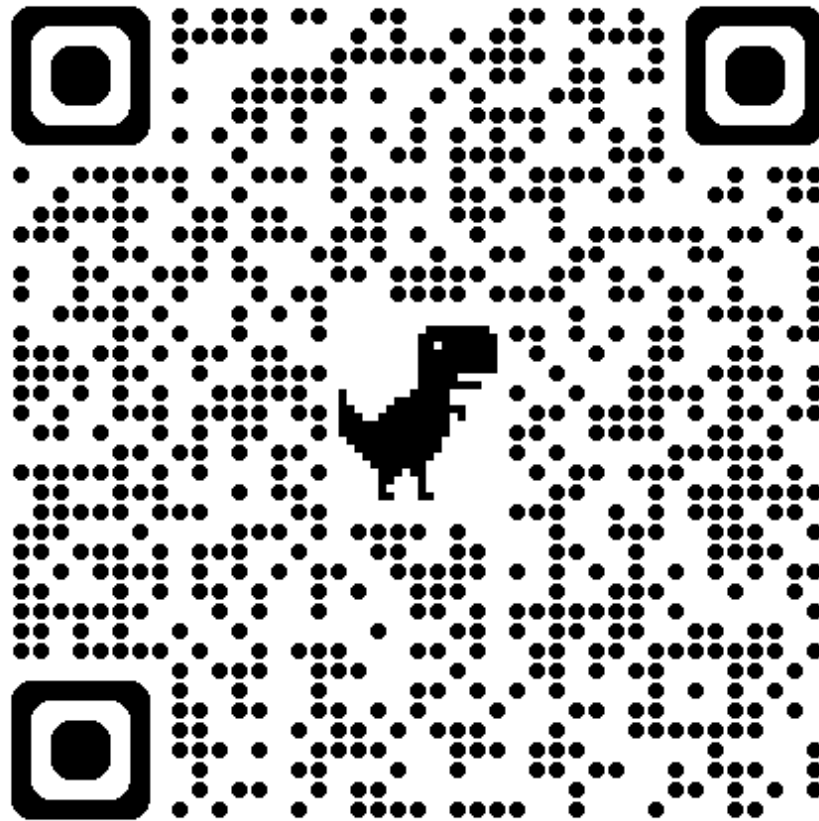
- **Health:** Being healthy is complex and challenging and requires resilience and adaptation in newcomer communities. Health is shaped by differences in transnational movement, economic circumstances, education, behavioral choices, living conditions, and the physical environment.
- **Civil Rights and Political Participation:** Policies and political decisions shape individuals’ civil rights and political participation in changing communities. This track welcomes proposals on topics that touch upon both the impact and the agency of civil rights.
- **Education and Youth Development:** Latine, Hispanic, and newcomer youth are resilient, activating their own cultural resources and assets as they grow and learn. The goal of this track is to bring together 4-H, extension specialists, researchers, and educators to work collaboratively on enhancing educational equity, opportunities, and youth development.
- **Community and Economic Development:** Latin Americans, Hispanics, and newcomers make important impacts across communities and economies through their entrepreneurialism, business development, and risk-taking mindsets. This track examines the processes and challenges of building bridges, promoting dialogues, and creating opportunities that benefit changing communities.

23rd Annual Conference Evaluation

At the end of the conference, we will appreciate knowing how we did this year and what recommendations you have for improvement! Please take 2 minutes to complete this survey on Friday June 6. Thank you!

Use this link or scan the QR code.

<https://forms.gle/AqCLrEvZnaKxs2fj9>



Special Guests

Kristin Sobolik, Chancellor, University of Missouri-St. Louis

Wednesday, June 4, 2025 / 1:00pm - Room: Sanctuary



Dr. [Kristin Sobolik](#) (*So-bow-lick*) was sworn in as the University of Missouri- St. Louis' eighth chancellor on April 30, 2021. Since that time, Sobolik has strategically ushered UMSL through a period of significant growth and transformation, including the launch of new academic programs and initiatives designed to support the region's need for a professional workforce that will propel St. Louis forward toward a strong and sustainable future. Her tenure has been committed to student success, community engagement, innovation, research and workforce development, and she remains committed to working with her team of campus leaders and the community to grow UMSL's success in serving its students and the region for decades to come.

Keynote Speakers

Nestor Gomez, Chicago Poet and Author

Wednesday, June 4, 2025 / 1:00-2:15 pm - Room: Sanctuary



[Nestor "the Boss" Gomez](#) was born in Guatemala and traveled to Chicago in the 1980's. He told his first story at a Moth story slam to get over the stuttering that plagued his childhood; since then, he has won close to 100 Moth Slams. Nestor has performed and conducted storytelling workshops in multiple locations around the country. He also created his own storytelling show "80 Minutes Around the World," featuring the stories of immigrants and refugees from different parts of the world, their descendants, and allies, all this with the aim of providing a greater understanding of the realities, struggles and dreams of the migration experience.

Socorro Herrera, Kansas State University

Thursday, June 5, 2025 / 9:00-10:15 am - Room: Sanctuary



[Socorro G. Herrera](#) is a district consultant, and trainer of trainers, as well as a professor in the College of Education and director of the Center for Intercultural and Multilingual Advocacy (CIMA) at Kansas State University. Her K-12 teaching experience includes an emphasis on literacy development, and her research focuses on literacy opportunities with culturally and linguistically diverse students, reading strategies, and domestic and international teacher preparation for diversity in the classroom. Dr. Herrera has authored several books and numerous articles focusing on issues of instruction and assessment with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Daniel I. Morales, University of Houston

Thursday, June 5, 2025 / 1:00-2:15 pm - Room: Sanctuary



[Professor Daniel I. Morales](#) is a scholar and theorist of immigration law known for his work challenging the legitimacy of immigration controls and highlighting the advantages of a less nationalized immigration system. His scholarship has appeared in leading law reviews, including the N.Y.U. Law Review, U.C. Irvine Law Review, Indiana Law Journal, and Wake Forest Law Review. He is a co-editor, with Professor Nick De Genova, of a forthcoming book from Duke University Press exploring the applicability of abolitionist thought to the migration context. Professor Morales began his academic career as a William H. Hastie Fellow at the University of Wisconsin Law School and subsequently clerked for both the Hon. R. Guy Cole Jr., U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit, and the Hon. Joan B. Gottschall, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

Gilberto Pinela, City of Saint Louis

Friday, June 6, 2025 / 12:00-1:30 pm - Room: Sanctuary



[Gilberto Pinela](#) is the Director of the Office of New Americans in the Office of Mayor Cara Spencer, where he helps make St. Louis a welcoming and thriving place for immigrants and refugees. A native of Puerto Rico and a first-generation college graduate, he holds a master's degree in communications and is currently pursuing his MBA at Webster University. Gilberto previously co-owned a landscape company serving major corporate clients and served as president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. He also made history as Missouri's first non-native Latine host of the Spanish-language community affairs show *Ahora San Luis*. A passionate advocate for immigrant, refugee, and LGBTQ+ communities, Gilberto serves on multiple civic boards and is a St. Louis City Commissioner. A U.S. Air Force veteran, he has been a proud resident of Tower Grove South since 2016. His personal mantra is *¡Sí se puede!*

General Guidelines for Presenters and Participants

On-site Registration

Registrants can pick up their name tags starting at noon on Wednesday, June 4 at the Il Monastero Front Hall. In addition, on-site registration will be available for individuals who have not yet registered. Name tags are required for all sessions and conference events.

Technology

There will be a computer, projector, and Wi-Fi available in each of the concurrent break-out rooms. However, to be safe, we recommend having your presentation materials on a flash drive as well. The Wi-Fi password will be provided at registration. Feel free to reach out to a member of our volunteer squad with questions about technology.

Poster Exhibit

If you are presenting a poster, this information is for you. Posters will be set up on the first day of the conference. Easels or boards will be provided. Presenters should bring their own tape, pins, paper, or other materials. Poster size should not exceed 4'x4'.

Parking

There is limited free parking located in front of the conference venue. There is also street parking and the Olive Compton parking garage near the venue (for a fee; 3556 Lindell Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63103). Olive Compton parking garage has electric car chargers available.

Hotel Information

Thanks to our co-host, The Center for Social Action, Cambio de Colores registrants are guests of Saint Louis University (SLU). Through their partnership, we have been arranging hotel rooms at the rate of \$189 at the Angad Arts Hotel, which is within walking distance to the conference venue. If you are interested in a hotel room at Angad, please email muasevents@missouri.edu to check availability. Another option is the Element (3763 Forest Park Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63103; 314-639-0060), where you can directly ask for the “SLU discount” as a guest of Saint Louis University.

Transportation

Attendees are responsible for their own transportation to and from St. Louis Lambert International Airport (STL) and the Gateway Transportation Center (Amtrak). Rideshare services like Uber and Lyft, as well as traditional taxis, are available. The MetroLink light rail is also an affordable option.

What to Do in Saint Louis

While in St. Louis, you don't want to miss the recently renovated Old Courthouse, which is part of the Gateway Arch National Park, the City Museum, and Forest Park, with many free attractions like the St. Louis Zoo and Art Museum. For great food, music, and shopping, explore local neighborhoods like the Delmar Loop, Grand Center Arts District (where we're located!), and Central West End. Be sure to try local favorites like toasted ravioli and St. Louis-style BBQ. At the conference, we will share even more about the amazing international scenes and restaurants all across the city, especially on Grand Blvd., Cherokee Street (Latine), and Olive Street (Asian). You can also search for Hispanic/Latine owned businesses related to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Metro STL here: <https://business.hccstl.com/list>. ENJOY!

Program Schedule

Day 1 – Wednesday, June 4, 2025

12:00-1:00 pm **Conference Registration**
Il Monastero, Front Hall, Saint Louis University

1:00-2:15 pm **Welcoming Plenary**
Room: Sanctuary

Welcoming remarks by **Kristin Sobolik, Chancellor**, University of Missouri-St. Louis

Keynote Speaker: Nestor Gomez, Chicago Poet and Author **Health & Well-being Conference Track – Kickoff to Storytelling Festival**

Immigrant Journey

In this intimate and immersive performance, Gomez tells personal stories of his family's immigration to the United States and the social, cultural, and linguistic struggles he has navigated ever since. Nestor believes that we're all connected by universal experiences; his stories will draw you in and connect you to those experiences. Be prepared to laugh and commiserate with him and his unforgettable personal stories. Nestor is a Chicago poet and author of *Your Driver Has Arrived* – stories about his ride-sharing experiences.

2:15-2:30 pm **Break**

2:30-3:45 pm **Concurrent Breakout Sessions**

Breakout 1: Storytelling Festival – Workshop

Room: Sanctuary

Find Your Voice

Nestor Gomez, Chicago Poet and Author

Whether you've always wanted to tell stories or you're just starting to explore your creative voice, you'll learn the fundamentals of storytelling—how to structure your ideas, build compelling characters, and captivate your audience. No prior experience is necessary—just bring your curiosity and willingness to explore.

Breakout 2: Community & Economic Development – Research & Promising Practices

Room: St. Cabrini

Latine Farmworker Recruitment and Community Wellbeing in Ohio

Isaiah Franco, The Ohio State University

Agricultural systems in the US have long relied on flexible low-wage (usually undocumented) labor at peak points during production, with little consideration for the impacts of this low wage labor on farmworkers. To meet the challenge of decreasing worker availability, utilization of the H-2A temporary worker program has grown substantially in the US. As the US transitions from a largely undocumented but settled farm labor force to one which has legal work status but is temporary, it is important to study the social and economic impacts of this shift on farmworkers, farmers, and communities more broadly. Accordingly, this project uses mixed methods to analyze effects on community wellbeing in three Ohioan communities based on reliance on H-2A or non-H-2A laborers. In doing so, it aims to inform efforts by rural communities to adapt to changing migration patterns.

Advancing Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Leadership Programs for Latiné Communities in Minnesota
Guillermo Narváez, University of Minnesota

This presentation and paper examine leadership development programs offered by the University of Minnesota Extension and other similar programs. The focus is on how these programs address the needs of diverse Minnesota communities, particularly Latiné ones. The review identifies program strengths while assessing gaps between English-only versus culturally and language responsive ones. Emphasizing the importance of Spanish-language resources, the analysis explores barriers posed by English-only programs and their impact on Latiné engagement. Using a landscape analysis methodology, this work will provide actionable recommendations to create equitable, culturally responsive leadership and civic engagement opportunities. Additionally, this work will consider the ways resources can be made available to Latiné communities through channels and modalities that are more community relevant.

Social Capital, Belonging, and Mental Wellbeing in Multicultural Communities
Sarah Caldera Wimmer & Andrea Somoza, LifeWise StL

This presentation bridges research and practice by examining how bonding and bridging social capital contribute to immigrant and community wellbeing. Focusing on Latine immigrants in Saint Louis, it assesses the impact of social inclusion on mental health using qualitative and quantitative data. It highlights LifeWise StL's multilingual, activity-based interventions as a model for fostering cross-cultural connections. Findings provide insights for social policy, mental health research, and immigrant support programs, demonstrating how structured, low-verbal activities enhance inclusion and resilience. Interactive activities will engage participants in applied learning, offering practical strategies for community integration.

Stronger Together: Building Lasting Change Through Collaborative Advocacy
Ben Molina, Hispanic Leaders Groups of Greater St. Louis & Gabby Eissner, Convener, Missouri Immigration Policy Coalition

Collaboration is at the heart of meaningful social change, especially for us in immigrant and Hispanic communities who are navigating complex policy challenges. In this presentation, we will explore how partnerships—like the one between the Hispanic Leaders Group and the Missouri Immigration Policy Coalition—allow us to amplify our voices, pool our resources, and create more effective strategies for advocacy. By sharing our collective lessons learned, real-world successes, and practical approaches to coalition-building, we will highlight how working together not only strengthens our ability to influence policy but also helps us develop leadership and build resilience within our communities. Together, we can drive progress that lasts well beyond a single event or legislative session.

Breakout 3: Education & Youth Development – Workshop

Room: St. Madeleine

Growing Up with Pride: Fostering Additive Bilingualism in a Multilingual America

Amanda Niedzwiecki, Carver Dual Language School

Imagine an America where the language skills of multilingual learners are as valued as those of White, English-speaking children who have the privilege of learning a second language. We will take a walk through a brief history of bilingual education in the US to set the stage for utilizing one of the most powerful strategies and pedagogies for multilingual youth: translanguaging. Participants will leave the session with an increased awareness of the importance of additive bilingualism as well as concrete strategies to integrate translanguaging into their daily interactions.

Breakout 4: Health – Workshop

Room: St. Katherine

Helping Newcomers Be STRONG! Our Experience Providing the Supporting Transition Resilience of Newcomer Groups (STRONG) in a School Setting

Jessica McDonald & Deena Murdock, Carthage R9 School District

Supporting Transition Resilience of Newcomer Groups (STRONG) is an evidence-informed, school-based intervention for immigrant and refugee youth (K-12th grades). STRONG aims to build resilience and address psychological distress associated with the newcomer experience from a culturally contextualized lens.” Carthage R-9 District Counseling Specialists led a STRONG group in the 24/25 school year with five high school newcomer students. They would like to share their experiences and encouragement for other schools to utilize this resource.

Breakout 5: Education & Youth Development – Workshop

Room: Rose

Using AI to Make Programs, Routines and Resources Accessible

Ryan Rumpf, Missouri Office of Refugee Administration

This workshop focuses on providing recently arrived immigrants and refugees with a soft landing as they transition to life in their new city. AI-based tools can make the process far clearer for our new neighbors. This workshop will demonstrate several AI-based options to provide short explanatory videos and resources or develop a series of microlearning opportunities to families as they get on their feet in the US.

3:45-4:00 pm

Break

4:00-5:30 pm

Opening Reception, Poster Exhibit, and Cash Bar

Room: Sanctuary and St. Louise de Marillac

Musical Guest: Lucas Willsie

Lucas Willsie is a professor at Central Methodist University's Swinney Conservatory of Music. He researches Latin American musical styles and is a performing artist for Henri Selmer Paris Clarinets. Lucas will be playing 20 Brazilian *Choros*. Choro is a type of Brazilian instrumental music that has origins in the late 19th century and grew in popularity in the 20th century. It is characterized by its vibrant, cheerful beat and the virtuosity of the musicians. Choro ensembles are typically comprised of a solo instrument, the cavaquinho, guitars, and pandeiro.

Poster Exhibition

MexStl.org

Sara Hernández Angulo, Jade Pita del Prado, & Jonah Zacks, Washington University

MexStl.org is a research initiative dedicated to uncovering and documenting Mexican history in St. Louis. Using ArcGIS technology, we map and highlight the longstanding Mexican presence that has shaped and strengthened the city throughout history.

LGBTQ Students in Public Schools – How Can We Help?

Sarah Langley, University of Saint Thomas

From a historical standpoint, the LGBTQ community has seen many issues of inequality in America and worldwide. The level of oppression towards this community took power away from those who identify as LGBTQ. In Missouri in particular, LGBTQ people reported they felt stress and fear surrounding the possibilities of oppression and violent acts towards their community due to the lack of governmental protections or supports (Heiden-Rootes et al., 2024). It is imperative LGBTQ people find power and strength within themselves and in their community to keep moving forward. Across the United States, there is approximately one LGBTQ support center in each state. This leaves centers with a vast area to serve and little funds and support to do the work needed for LGBTQ communities to not only survive but thrive.

The History of Dual Language Education In: Kansas City Public Schools

Marena Nuñez Cruz, University of Missouri-Columbia

Bilingual education has existed in many forms in the United States since its founding as a country, but today's most common instructional approach, usually called "dual language," integrates students from different language backgrounds to study academic content material in two languages, and thereby develop bilingualism, biliteracy, and bi-cultural competence. This study explored the development of dual language education in Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS). The working research questions were: What are the roots of dual language bilingual education in KCPS? What kinds of schools opened and when? Who and what policies shaped the development of language schools over time?

Providing Linguistically Accessible Mental Health Services in Missouri: A Question of Capacity or Demand?

Miranda Wood, HEART Lab, University of Missouri-Columbia

Although the use of language services is increasing in the mental health field, English language fluency remains a significant barrier to accessing care. We examined mental health services at the facility level to understand the prevalence of linguistically accessible services in Missouri. Data was drawn from the 2020 National Mental

Health Services Survey. Among participating mental health facilities, 158 out of 212 (74.5%) reported providing services in a language other than English. Language services were associated with facility treatment focus and type, accepting Medicaid and prescribing antipsychotics for serious mental illness ($p < .037$). Results and limitations will be discussed in the context of the provision of accessible services and the changing demographics of Missouri.

Day 2 – Thursday, June 5, 2025

8:30-9:00 am Breakfast

Room: St. Louise de Marillac

9:00-10:15 am Plenary

Room: Sanctuary

Keynote Speaker: Socorro Herrera, Kansas State University Education & Youth Development Conference Track

Querencia: Comunidad, Familia y Fortaleza

In community, we will engage in conversation for collective change that is grounded in our history and faith in our own strength. Together we will explore intersections of community, family and fortitude to uplift and leverage la historia, el lenguaje and y la cultura of the home and community for educators and students. We will reflect on how to create spaces where the learner's full "humanity" is shared, valued, and made part of the tapestry of learning without reservation.

10:15-10:30 am Break

10:30-11:45 am Concurrent Breakout Sessions

Breakout 1: Education & Youth Development – Workshop

Room: Sanctuary

Community, Family and Biography: Situating and Valuing All Knowledge Socorro Herrera, Kansas State University

In this session we will engage in conversation(s) addressing the conditions necessary for creating learning opportunities for students by situationally attending to their biographies. Learning is best contextualized by creating "living moments" that draw upon the experiences, language, love and care that are lived within our everyday lives. By planning for and delivering instruction that situates all knowledge as valuable, we as educators are capable of creating opportunities that are grounded in the language, culture and experiences of the family and learner. Session participants will be provided with tools that set conditions for the community and family to be central to all teaching and learning.

Breakout 2: Storytelling Festival – Workshop

Room: St. Cabrini

Storytelling for Impact: Communicating Research, Practice, and Policy Across Sectors

Thi Nguyen, Founder of WinWin Scientific

Join us for a workshop designed to sharpen your communication skills, and practice collaborative storytelling to communicate across sectors. Participants will learn different frameworks for talking about research or practice. You'll learn the essential elements of a successful pitch—including framing your introduction and conclusion and presenting data with impact. Use tactics that storytellers use for movies and for investment pitches. You'll have fun practicing and finding a style that works for you. Importantly, you'll get to meet with other service providers, researchers, and advocates to start collaborations. By the end of this session, you'll have a refined storytelling toolkit to communicate your work with clarity and impact. This workshop will empower you to craft messages that inspire action.

Breakout 3: Health – Taller en español

Room: St. Madeleine

Arte y duelo migratorio: Pintando nuevos caminos

Eréndira García Guzmán, Coach de bienestar emocional, LifeWise StL

Este es un taller para adultos, orientado a promover el arte como vehículo de abreacción, comprensión y elaboración de las emociones experimentadas durante el duelo de migración. Se busca que los participantes experimenten de manera personal este taller, además de brindarles información sobre cómo se implementó en nuestra organización para que puedan replicarlo, adaptarlo o rediseñar esta herramienta terapéutica en sus propios contextos, además de brindarles información sobre el fenómeno psicológico de duelo de migración. Este taller se diseñó y se llevó a cabo con participantes hispano hablantes de todos los géneros, inmigrantes, adultos. Originalmente se realizó en LifeWise StL y se replicó en las instalaciones del proyecto MICA. Ambas organizaciones sin fines de lucro. Se llevó de manera gratuita para los participantes.

Breakout 4: Education & Youth Development – Panel

Room: St. Katherine

Fostering State Capacity to Support Refugee Newcomers to Missouri K-12 Schools

Emily Crawford, University of Missouri-Columbia; Shawn Cockrum, Missouri Office of Refugee Administration

Shelly Wooten Fair, Columbia Public Schools; Juan José Reyes, Cambio Center

This panel will 1) provide an overview of refugee resettlement in Missouri; 2) introduce how the Missouri Office of Refugee Administration (MO-ORA) builds K-12 school district capacity to support newcomer students and families through RSI grants; 3) offer an analysis for how 39 Missouri districts planned to use grant funding; and 4) provide an on-the-ground perspective from a district leader(s) as to how RSI grants are making a difference in their school community. Panelists will highlight how MO-ORA and school districts are responding to the contemporary political moment in the U.S. and (re)imagining what is possible for newcomers to Missouri.

11:45-12:00 pm Break

12:00-1:00 pm Lunch

Room: St. Louise de Marillac

1:00-2:15 pm

Plenary

Room: Sanctuary

Keynote Speaker: Daniel I. Morales, University of Houston
Civil Rights & Political Participation Conference Track

Recovering Migration's Reality in a Surreal World

Forty years of bipartisan effort have gone into producing today's surreal migration horrors; a world where America's greatest strength—the ability to integrate newcomers into society— is felt by most citizens today to be its biggest liability. In this talk I will explore the ways law has helped to produce the present moment and how social movements might work to push us out of it; if only law can both get out of the way—and lend a hand.

2:15-2:30 pm

Break

2:30-3:45 pm

Concurrent Breakout Sessions

Breakout 1: Community & Economic Development – Research & Promising Practices

Room: Sanctuary

Latinos Contributions to the United States' Economy, Marcelo Siles

Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University

In the last few years, Latinos have been portrayed by politicians, the media, and some researchers in a very negative way. The purpose of this study is to showcase the important contributions that Latinos, at the national level, are making to the U.S. economy. The steadily flow of Latino immigrants continue with noticeable changes, currently “Other Immigrants” mainly those who come from Central and South American countries have the largest numbers, most of them come with high educational levels and practical skills that the nation needs. In the last 50 years, the educational attainment of Latinos has been notably increasing. Their participation in the labor force is the higher among all racial groups, and their home ownership rates are increasing. Their most important and direct contribution to the national economy is through the payment of state and local taxes among others.

Establishing a Community Centered Multicultural, Multilingual Participatory Advisory Council

Natalie Gemberling-Webb & Sarah Caldera Wimmer, LifeWise StL

This presentation explores best practices for creating multicultural, multilingual, and demographically diverse advisory councils, using the LifeWise StL Family & Community Council as a model. It highlights strategies for creating equity, building trust, and ensuring meaningful community participation in organizational decision-making. Lessons learned, including multilingual engagement, inclusive recruitment, and equity-centered facilitation, will be shared. The presentation also examines the broader impact of participatory advisory boards on program effectiveness, community empowerment, and equitable policy development. Attendees will gain practical insights and tools to create advisory structures that authentically represent and serve diverse communities. Interactive discussions will enhance engagement.

Asian Americans Live Here: Oral Histories, Origins and Opportunities for Reclamation

Robin Hattori, Japanese American Citizens League

Asian Americans, the fastest growing minority group in the region according to the latest census, often cite feeling invisible in community dominated by a Black/white divide. Several community leaders and groups have sought innovative ways to address this situation. Inclusion in the historical canon, intentional documentation of individual stories, initiatives to elevate our perspectives and talents, and university-community collaborations have all proved promising practices for demonstrating how the St. Louis community has changed because of the presence of Asian Americans. This presentation discusses the challenges and opportunities from these efforts that may serve as a roadmap for others.

Welcoming in Central Illinois

Ricardo Diaz & Rachel Joy, City of Champaign

It is easy to forget during these hard times that immigrants are part of the rebuilding of the USA, they have always been so. This presentation will detail the welcoming work in several cities downstate from the Chicagoland area. Champaign has become the first formally designated Welcoming City in the area and several others are taking steps to be so audited. The presence of coalitions, a welcoming plan, and collaboration with police departments are preliminary and steps beyond self-proclaiming a sanctuary city. Our discussion welcomes sharing strategies to increase the capacity of city staff and not for profit agencies to fill the space with positive work instead of scaring people from the natural process of migration.

Breakout 2: Health – Research

Room: St. Cabrini

The 'Viviendo Bien' study: Optimal Wellness for Missouri's Hispanic people

Maithe Enriquez, University of Missouri

A participatory needs assessment will lead to a deep understanding of the community's perceptions, beliefs, and desires regarding addressing excess diabetes in Hispanic people. We employ group discussion as the principal data collection method. Group discussion is an effective data collection strategy in participatory research. Participants feel comfortable talking in small groups and the group setting helps people to express their feelings. Findings from these group discussions will inform a community-partnered research agenda that will develop and deploy practical intervention strategies to reduce the high burden of diabetes, and other health inequities, in Hispanic communities.

Exploring Sub-Saharan African Immigrant Males' Experiences of Gender Roles and Intimate Partner Violence in the US: A Critical Qualitative Inquiry

Annie Banda, Iowa State University

Close relationships can be supportive and sexually stimulating but may also lead to depression and unpleasant emotions, increasing the risk of harming loved ones. This study examines male immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and their perceptions of intimate partner violence (IPV) by female partners, focusing on gender dynamics and conflict. SSA immigrant men face challenges balancing self-sufficiency, masculinity, and employment due to cultural customs and patriarchal ideologies. The IPV Stigmatization Model (Overstreet &

Quinn, 2013) and the Acculturation Model (Berry, 1988) are used to explore cultural, internalized, and anticipated stigmas and help-seeking strategies.

Increasing Access to Mental Healthcare: A Qualitative Appraisal of Barriers and Opportunities for Spanish-Speaking Populations in Columbia, Missouri

Miranda Wood and Maia Zalik Markollari, University of Missouri-Columbia

In the United States, Hispanic and Latine individuals are disproportionately impacted by barriers to accessing mental health services. This project aimed to understand opportunities and barriers to access within the Columbia, Mo community through stakeholder interviews. We also reviewed how these barriers and opportunities exist with a local university running mental health clinic. Barriers were categorized into language, outreach, stigma, logistics, and training. Opportunities were found to be collaboration, outreach, graduate students, and community. Altogether, there is an obligation for mental health providers to advocate and work towards improving service accessibility. Through this work we hope to inspire stakeholder collaboration and further discussion on how to remove barriers and take advantage of opportunities to better serve the Hispanic and Latine community.

Breakout 3: Storytelling Festival – Taller en español

Room: St. Madeleine

Descubre tu Voz

Nestor Gomez, Poeta y Autor de Chicago

Si siempre has querido contar historias, o apenas estás empezando a explorar tu creatividad, aprenderás los fundamentos de la narración: cómo estructurar tus ideas, crear personajes cautivadores y cautivar a tu público. No necesitas experiencia previa; solo trae tu curiosidad y ganas de explorar.

Breakout 4: Education & Youth Development – Workshop

Room: St. Katherine

Cultivating Global Citizens: Developing Intercultural Competence in High School Students

Sarah Wolters, Sarah Wolters Co.

Equip educators and administrators with actionable tools to foster intercultural competence as a cornerstone of young adult personal development. This session emphasizes the value of helping students navigate cultural differences, build empathy, and develop skills essential for thriving in a diverse, interconnected world. Participants will explore practical strategies to integrate intercultural learning into their curriculum, fostering critical thinking and meaningful dialogue. By creating intentional opportunities for growth, educators can empower students to become globally aware, inclusive leaders prepared to address challenges and embrace opportunities in multicultural environments. Join us to inspire transformative learning and lasting cultural understanding.

3:45-4:00 pm

Break

4:00-5:30 pm

Concurrent Breakout Sessions

Breakout 1: Health – Panel

Room: Sanctuary

“Good data, better lives”: Using the All of Us Research Program to engage communities and researchers to better understand Latino health

Maria Jose Sanchez, University of Nebraska Medical Center; Marcela Carvajal, University of Nebraska Medical Center; Natalia Trinidad, University of Nebraska Medical Center; Athena K. Ramos, University of Nebraska Medical Center; Misty Phillips, University of Missouri-Columbia

Moving into a data-driven world requires better data collection that is objective, diverse, and captures subjects' contexts. The All of Us (AoU) research program, established by the National Institutes of Health in 2016, contributes to precision medicine and aims to recruit one million people including those underrepresented in research. The presentation aims to share the University of Nebraska system and the Heartland Consortium at the University of Missouri experiences using the AoU data across communities (outreach), and researchers, and showcase two research studies focusing on health literacy and obesity indicators among Latinos.

Breakout 2: Education & Youth Development – Research & Promising Practices

Room: St. Cabrini

Exploring Bilingual Education in Oregon: Equity, Resilience, and the Future of Multilingual Learning

Carrie Larson, Pacific University and Esperanza De La Vega, Portland State University

This qualitative study explores the evolving landscape of bilingual education in Oregon, focusing on the experiences of educators across 12 school districts with diverse Latine populations. Through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and artifact collection, the research examines the development, sustainability, and challenges of bilingual programs. The findings highlight three key themes: the role of bilingual education in promoting equity, the importance of culturally responsive practices, and the persistent hope for expanding bilingual opportunities. This research underscores the transformative potential of bilingual education in fostering inclusive, equitable learning environments for multilingual students in Oregon and beyond.

The Role of Latino Teachers' Lived Experiences in Shaping their Retention in Midwestern Schools

Haydee Taylor-Arnold, Ladue Horton Watkins High School & Foreign Language Association of Missouri

This study explores the lived experiences of ten Latino teachers, highlighting the interplay between their cultural identities and workplace challenges. Using LatCrit and Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) frameworks, it examines systemic biases and cultural disconnections impacting these educators. Generation 1.0 Latino teachers often navigate stereotypes and marginalization, while Generations 1.5 and 2.0 leverage dual identities to connect with students. Despite their contributions, Latino teachers face barriers such as microaggressions and limited support. The study emphasizes the need for mentorship, inclusive communities, equitable compensation, culturally relevant curricula, and mental health support to improve retention and enhance their professional experiences.

SchoolLink: Bridging Gaps and Supporting All School Communities

Donna Garcia and Valeria Adams, ParentLink / SchoolLink

This presentation will introduce SchoolLink, an innovative program designed to connect students and families with essential services, resources, and support systems. While SchoolLink is beneficial to all populations, special

attention will be given to how it can effectively serve Latine families, addressing unique challenges they face in accessing education, healthcare, and social services. The session will highlight how SchoolLink's inclusive approach fosters community engagement, reduces barriers to services, and enhances outcomes for Latine students and families. Attendees will gain valuable insights into utilizing SchoolLink to strengthen their own communities and ensure equitable access to support for all.

Teaching for Translanguaging: Lessons from a Newly Expanding Language Policy Context

Alissa Blair and Vicki Collet, University of Arkansas

This session presents instructional approaches and classroom conditions that promote translanguaging based on a classroom study conducted in a Southcentral state with recent legislation allowing languages other than English for instruction. These lessons are drawn from a 5th-grade general education classroom where a mentor teacher, student teacher, and students with varied English and Spanish abilities engage in flexible language practices that support learning and create a positive classroom climate. These instructional approaches and classroom conditions help ensure that students representing a range of bilingual abilities fully participate in learning and feel affirmed in their bilingualism. Participants of this session will walk away with practical ideas to elevate bilingualism in their classrooms, even in contexts where the use of languages other than English is still evolving.

Breakout 3: Education & Community Development – Investigación y prácticas prometedoras en español

Room: St. Madeleine

Redacción colaborativa de textos académicos: Una actividad basada en el Aprendizaje Colaborativo

Nadya Carolina Portillo Flores, Escuela Agrícola Panamericana Zamorano, Honduras

Este estudio se sustentó bajo el modelo del Aprendizaje Colaborativo para la realización de una actividad colaborativa de escritura académica. Los objetivos de esta investigación se establecieron en dos vías, primero, determinar la injerencia del trabajo colaborativo en el desarrollo y fortalecimiento de competencias comunicativas en expresión escrita. Por otra parte, identificar las habilidades comunicativas y colaborativas que se fortalecen al implementar una actividad de redacción colaborativa, basada en el aprendizaje colaborativo. La actividad se implementó en el curso de Redacción Técnica (2023), en la Escuela Agrícola Panamericana Zamorano; donde, a través de equipos de trabajos, los estudiantes realizaron un resumen académico a partir de una aplicación Drive. Se determinó que, en la tarea de redacción colaborativa, el trabajo colaborativo sí tiene una injerencia positiva.

Migrants Narrative Typologies: How do Spanish-Speaking Migrants Construct Knowledge about Migration through Digital Platforms?

Indiana Garcia Torres, University of Missouri-Columbia

Las historias orales han sido una práctica ancestral en las familias y comunidades hispanas, donde tradicionalmente se da un intercambio verbal e íntimo de experiencias para transmitir conocimiento y fortalecer la cohesión social. Hoy en día, las plataformas digitales han transformado esta práctica, influyendo en fenómenos sociales como la migración. Estas plataformas permiten que los migrantes hispanohablantes compartan experiencias post-migratorias a gran escala, integrando imágenes, videos, música y texto. Este estudio examina la tipología de historias orales digitales que los migrantes utilizan para construir conocimiento sobre la migración. Tras revisar una amplia gama de contenido e interacciones en YouTube, se seleccionaron dos videos clave por su

enfoque en la preparación migratoria y los aspectos legales. Utilizando un análisis narrativo, el material se clasificó en relatos realistas (cuentas prácticas), relatos confesionales (luchas emocionales) y relatos impresionistas (comentarios reflexivos). Los resultados muestran un predominio de los relatos realistas, seguidos por los confesionales.

Resistiendo la Marginación Lingüística: Lecciones de Estudiantes Colombianos en Prácticas de Investigación y Jóvenes Latinos Rurales en EE. UU.

Alejandro Baquero Sierra, Purdue University

Esta presentación explora cómo los estudiantes hispanohablantes —desde estudiantes colombianos de pregrado en prácticas de investigación en EE. UU. hasta jóvenes latinos rurales en escuelas K–12— navegan y desafían las ideologías dominantes del idioma inglés. Mediante investigaciones cualitativas y métodos mixtos, se destacan cómo las jerarquías lingüísticas, las cargas emocionales y la exclusión sistémica moldean las experiencias académicas y las autopercepciones de estos estudiantes. Los hallazgos revelan que la competencia en inglés funciona a la vez como barrera y como espacio de negociación identitaria. A través de perspectivas comparativas, la presentación ofrece estrategias prácticas y culturalmente sostenibles para que educadores y organizaciones comunitarias afirmen el multilingüismo, aborden los costos emocionales de la marginación lingüística y desafíen las narrativas deficitarias en entornos educativos dominados por el inglés.

Breakout 4: Education & Youth Development – Workshop

Room: St. Katherine

Collaboration for PreK-3 Transitions with Bi/Multilingual Children

Amanda Spalter, Tricia Blanco, WIDA-University of Wisconsin-Madison; Eduardo Pérez, Western Illinois University

This interactive workshop highlights practices that promote collaboration for equitable transitions across PreK-3 for bi/multilingual children and their families (transitions from childcare, a program, or from one grade level to another one). Participants will explore a case study of a PreK-1 dual language program and their family and community partnerships. Participants will leave with a variety of tools and ideas for collaborating across home, school, and community spaces that they can adapt and implement in their local setting.

5:30-6:00 pm

Break (time to drive to film screening at Washington University)

6:00-8:30 pm

Film Screening and Panel

Location: Washington University

Un Día Normal by Mexicut Film

Produced by Mexicut Films in 2023, [Un Día Normal](#) (A Normal Day in Spanish) is an award-winning drama short film about the challenges faced by recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, and the impact of immigration enforcement in families and communities. On Thursday, June 5, conference participants will attend the Missouri premiere of this film at Washington University, thanks to [CRE2](#) and [The Weidenbaum Center](#). A discussion panel will follow the screening, featuring the director, Maurizio Dominguez and other distinguished guests. Location and

details to be shared at the conference. Everyone must register, either as a conference participant or via a special invitation. Read more information about the film [here](#).

Panelists and Moderators: Director Maurizio Dominguez; Cynthia Feliciano, Sociology, Washington University; William D. Lopez, School of Public Health & Latina/o Studies, University of Michigan; Diana Parra Perez, Washington University

Day 3 – Friday, June 6, 2025

8:30-9:00 am

Breakfast

Room: St. Louise de Marillac

Conference Site Visits (For Site Visits Registrants Only)

*Participants who signed up for Site Visits to LifeWise StL and SEED St. Louis will meet at 8:30 am, and they will enjoy their visits and share some food at their sites from 9-10:30 am. We will arrive back to the conference venue by 11 am. **Please meet promptly at the entrance of Il Monastero at 8:30 am for transportation to the site visit.***

Site Visit Option 1: LifeWise STL

Relationship based, culturally responsive programming

Join our staff for a tour of LifeWise StL, a 125-year-old nonprofit with a rich history of serving immigrants newly arrived in St. Louis. Over the past two decades, our programming has expanded to include relationship-based mentoring, coaching and therapy that address the financial, social, physical, and emotional needs of our diverse community. We provide entry points of participation for the entire family, taking a holistic approach to supporting individuals at every stage of life. The tour will be followed by a panel of experienced staff who will discuss program development, engagement, and unique challenges. This opportunity is ideal for social service agencies looking to explore innovative approaches and for service providers seeking to engage diverse communities in culturally responsive ways. lifewisestl.org.

Site Visit Option 2: SEED STL

Cultivating Community: The Seed St. Louis International Farm Tour

This event offers participants a guided tour of Seed St. Louis's International Farm, led by an experienced farm member. You'll gain first-hand knowledge about the farm's operations and impact and engage in discussions on the critical importance of land access for immigrant and refugee communities in St. Louis. The International Farm plays a key role in affirming cultural identity, promoting food security and skill development, and providing a welcoming space for diverse communities to connect and learn. seedstl.org

9:00-10:15 pm

Concurrent Breakout Sessions

Breakout 1: Community & Economic Development – Panel

Room: Sanctuary

Texas-Mexican Music and Community in the Midwest: Telling Our Story Through Oral History

Richard Dávila, Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University; Alicia Loza, Community Member; Jose Chapa, Community Member; Daniel Oropeza, Community Member

As thousands of Tejana/o migrant laborers permanently settled in the Midwest from the 1950s to the 1970s, a vast network emerged to serve their particular musical tastes, a history which has until recently remained hidden in plain sight. This network included promoters, radio DJs, record store owners, and record label founders who laid an infrastructure for Texas-Mexican music, as well as local bands who were responsive to both musical trends in Texas and the changing tastes of audiences in the region. Tejana/o in-migration has slowed considerably following changes in the labor market since the 1970s, but still, *vivimos aquí*. This panel will invite participants to share their experiences of and perspectives on Midwest Tejano music and to reflect on their experiences of taking part in an oral history project and how the project impacts their community.

Breakout 2: Civil Rights & Political Participation – Workshop

Room: St. Cabrini

What Researchers Can Learn from Community Organizers and Why Organizers Need More Economics

Trinidad Raj Molina & Itzel Vargas-Valenzuela, Advocates for Immigrant Rights and Reconciliation (AIRR)

Circles of Development (CoD) is a model of community development that integrates established methods of community organizing together with development economics. This model has led to especially insightful research, because organizers work closely together with economists to do "deep work" in the community, strategically building relationships and going out to parts of the community normally ignored by the democratic process, especially in areas with relatively new groups of immigrants and refugees. Often the "research" involves coordinating with community surveyors from local immigrant groups. Inviting many people to the table means that each immigrant group can do deeper research with their own people. This presentation also asks people to practice CoD methods through an interactive mini-research project on the "capabilities" and "community assets" of those present in the room.

Breakout 3: Education & Youth Development – Panel

Room: St. Madeleine

Vivimos Aquí! Interpreting and Projecting Latiné Students' Educational Outcomes: Using Research and AI

Theresa Torres, University of Missouri-Kansas City; Robert Johnson, University of Missouri-Kansas City; Robert-Abel Porras, University of Missouri-Kansas City

Politicians often use scare tactics to frame the Latiné growing presence. Recognizing this context, we employ our expertise that centers on the assets, contributions, and needs of Latinés. We will address the Latiné population in Missouri, then center on the Kansas City and St. Louis metropolitan areas as case studies for use in similar settings. Using statistical analysis and AI analysis of the Latiné population from 2000-2024 with a focus on educational testing, we will provide an estimate of the projected growth, contributions, and needs of Latinés and their youth for the next ten years.

Breakout 4: Education & Youth Development – Workshop

Room: St. Katherine

¡Estudiamos Acá! Resilience, Resistance, and Well-Being in U.S. Higher Education Through Our Own Practices

Sophia Piral Lee, University of Missouri-Columbia; Maryluz Hoyos Ensuncho, MOST Policy Initiative

Scholarship highlights how U.S. higher education is challenging for marginalized students. Through a workshop designed for students of color, we aim to, collaboratively and in situ, create a list of healing practices and action plans to overcome isolation and challenges in the U.S. With reflective activities and pláticas, we will explore how diverse structures and policies in higher education have affected our well-being during and after pursuing a degree and what we have done to develop more resilience, resistance, and well-being. This workshop will help students to feel accompanied in their journeys and create a plan for their well-being.

10:15-10:30 am Break

10:30-11:45 am Concurrent Storytelling Sessions (Breakouts 3, 4 and 5 to be determined)

Breakout 1: Storytelling Festival – Panel

Room: Sanctuary

Amplifying Voices, Building Bridges: Stories of Strength, Storytelling, and Solidarity

Esmeralda Aharon, Krysta Grangeno, & Gabriela Ramirez-Arellano, #1 International Best-Selling Authors

When we rise, we don't rise alone! In this high-energy, interactive session, join the compilers of the #1 international best-selling anthology *Calladitas Rising* and the founders of *Latinas Rising* as we break silence, share lessons learned, and ignite the collective power of our voices. Through a powerful panel discussion and audience-driven conversation, we'll explore: (1) How our cultura, roots, and lived experiences are superpowers. (2) What "paying tuition"—the price of growth—has taught us about leadership, visibility, and healing. (3) How we move from being overlooked to being undeniable changemakers. This session highlights personal reflections from *Calladitas Rising* authors Krysta Grangeno, Esmeralda Aharon, and Gabriela Ramirez-Arellano. Together, we will reclaim our power, reframe our stories, and remember that our voices are not just meant to be heard—they are meant to transform the world. This is more than a conversation—it's a call to action. Together, we'll amplify our voices, build bridges across our communities, and create the lasting change our future deserves.

Breakout 2: Storytelling Festival – Presentations

Room: St. Cabrini

Stories from Immigrant Women in Rural Missouri

Kandice Grossman, University of Missouri-Columbia; Rebecca Scott, University of Missouri-Columbia

This presentation explores the immigrant experience in two rural communities in Missouri, through the personal narratives of two longtime residents. Their stories reveal the harsh realities of labor exploitation, health care inequities, and educational shortcomings, as well as the resilience and agency of immigrant women. By comparing these two places—one marked by grassroots labor activism, the other by quiet perseverance—this talk highlights the structural challenges faced by immigrant communities and the varied ways they respond. It invites reflection on what justice, belonging, and rural equity mean in today's heartland.

Latina Entrepreneurs of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro STL

Martha Garcia Kampen; Elsa Avila

Breakout 3: Storytelling Festival – Story Circle

Room: St. Madeleine

- *During this time, individuals who took part in storytelling workshops and who want to practice telling their story will have the opportunity to join a story circle. We will limit the circle to about 8 story tellers; they will have about 6 minutes each.*
- *If you want to tell your story in a story circle, please sign up at the sheet provided at the registration table.*
- *Conference attendees are encouraged to come, listen, learn, and share alongside the story tellers.*

Breakout 4: Storytelling Festival – Story Circle

Room: St. Katherine

- *Same as Breakout 3, if another room is needed.*

Breakout 5: Storytelling Festival – Story Recording Room

Room: Rose

- *During this time, individuals who took part in storytelling workshops and who want to record their story individually or anonymously will have an opportunity to do so.*
- *Please sign up at the sheet provided at the registration table.*

11:45-12:00 pm **Break**

12:00-1:30 pm **Lunch and Plenary**

Room: Sanctuary

Keynote Speaker: Gilberto Pinela, City of Saint Louis Community & Economic Development Conference Track

Bridging Opportunity: How New Americans Are Shaping the Future of St. Louis

New Americans are helping shape the future of St. Louis—starting businesses, revitalizing neighborhoods, and contributing to a more dynamic and inclusive city. The City’s Office of New Americans is paving the way by ensuring that immigrants and refugees have access to the tools, resources, and support they need to thrive. Under the administration of Mayor Cara Spencer, the Office will continue to serve as a vital bridge—connecting communities, fostering economic opportunity, and assuring that all newcomers are genuinely welcomed and have a sense of belonging. Target Audience: School Personnel, Mental Health Professionals

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US THIS YEAR!

Please come again next year to Columbia, Missouri.

SAVE THE DATE: June 3-5, 2026