AGENDA

8 – 9 A.M.  BREAKFAST & RECEPTION (RIVER ROOM)

9 – 10 A.M.  WELCOME & OVERVIEW (RIVER ROOM)

10:15 – 11:30 A.M.  MORNING WORKSHOPS (VARIOUS ROOMS)
  • Youth Voices: A Discussion About the Equity of Youth Experiences Regarding Race and Gender (Community Room)
  • Explore the Advocate Within (Room 311)
  • Invest in the Long Game: The Power of Persistence (Room 410)
  • Building an Organizational Culture Grounded in Equity (Room 411)
  • Building Bridges, Meeting Client Needs: Law Students and Legal Services Agencies Collaborate to Provide Access to Justice (Room 511)

11:45 A.M. – 1 P.M.  LUNCH & KEYNOTE (RIVER ROOM)
  • Karen DeMeola, Assistant Dean for Finance, Administration, and Enrollment, University of Connecticut School of Law

1:15 – 2:30 P.M.  AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS (VARIOUS ROOMS)
  • Government-Sponsored Discrimination: How Historic and Current Policies Entrench Segregation in Connecticut (Community Room)
  • Creating Equal Opportunities: Raising Awareness About Equity and Mindfulness for Students with Disabilities and Those Needing Special Education (Room 311)
  • Through the Lens of Equity: Understanding Self as We Understand One Another (Room 410)
  • How Art Can Reflect, Reimagine, and Revolutionize Equity (Room 411)
  • Poison in the Soil: Dismantling Racism in the Classroom (Room 511)

2:45 – 3:30 P.M.  CLOSING REMARKS (RIVER ROOM)
  • Steven Hernández, Executive Director, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity
Karen DeMeola
Karen is the Assistant Dean for Finance, Administration, and Enrollment at the University of Connecticut School of Law. She received her undergraduate degree in psychology from UConn and her J.D. from UConn Law. After graduating from law school, Karen was a civil rights litigator whose practice focused primarily on employment discrimination, police brutality and housing discrimination. While at UConn Law, she has been an adjunct professor teaching Critical Identity Theory and has presented on numerous panels, symposia, and conferences on diversifying law school populations, implicit bias, intersectionality, inclusive leadership, and diversity and inclusion. Karen has also created numerous pipeline projects, including the CBA Pathways to Legal Careers Pipeline. Karen is the immediate past president of the Connecticut Bar Association.

Karen has been the recipient of the Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity Edwin Archer Randolph Diversity Award; the CWEALF Maria Miller Stewart Award; the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities Constance Baker Motley Award for Business and Law; and the University of Connecticut Spirit Award.

WORKSHOPS
(LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER BY TITLE)

Building an Organizational Culture Grounded in Equity
In this workshop, attendees will hear a presentation about the organizational culture building and equity journey undertaken by a family foundation. You’ll hear about the process and activities that helped the staff and board deepen their equity lens and critically examine traditional philanthropic practices in pursuit of working more equitably with and for community. This work included an explicit focus on shifting white culture within the organization to a more inclusive, multicultural environment. The presentation will be followed by a Q&A session.
This workshop is limited to 40 people. All levels of knowledge and experience around equity issues are welcome.

**Workshop Presenter**
Janée Woods Weber
Janée tends to the reflective, expressive, and creative capacities of the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, including how the organization articulates and practices its values in internal relationships and with the community, learns as an organization and integrates lessons into its practices, and manifests those values and practices through its public voice. Janée also coordinates communications for the organization and the Justice Literacy program, which identifies opportunities for shared learning among the staff and the community around issue areas attached to the mission, which is to achieve equity in education by working with those affected and inspiring all to end racism and poverty.

**Building Bridges, Meeting Client Needs: Law Students and Legal Services Agencies Collaborate to Provide Access to Justice**
Earlier this year, students at the University of Connecticut School of Law built an automated interview process for creating advanced health care directives on behalf of the Connecticut Legal Rights Project, which will offer the service to its low-income clients. The students working on the health care directives faced the challenge of converting a 27-page paper questionnaire into an engaging interactive experience. The class, none of whom had programming experience, used cloud-based software called A2J Author to devise a one-hour process that generates a print-ready health care directive on end-of-life medical care. This panel discussion will describe the development process as well as the impact of the project on Connecticut’s communities. The panel will also offer opportunities for other legal service organizations who are interested in these types of collaborations. Members of the panel come from the UConn Law School, the Connecticut Legal Rights Project, and the Center for Computer Assisted Legal Instruction A2J Project.

**Workshop Presenters**
Jessica de Perio Wittman (Moderator)
Jessica de Perio Wittman is an associate professor and the Cornelius J. Scanlon Scholar at the University of Connecticut School of Law where she teaches Technology and Law Practice and Special Education Law. She also serves as director of the law library where she oversees all library operations as well as the information technology systems, equipment, and services for the law school. Jessica has held many leadership positions within the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) and continues to be a member of AALL, Law Librarians of New England (LLNE), Southern New England Law Libraries Association (SNELLA), and the Connecticut Bar Association. She also serves as an executive committee member on the Law Libraries & Legal Information section for the American Association of Law Schools. Jessica is a frequent presenter at AALL and other professional conferences, where she speaks on cybersecurity and teaching legal technology competencies to today’s law students, as well as other topics related to diversity and inclusion in law librarianship and legal education. She received her J.D. from Seattle University School of Law and her M.L.S. from the University at Buffalo. Her research interests include special education and disability law, the incorporation of technology in lawyering and legal education, and law librarianship.

Ramy Esmail (Panelist)
Ramy Esmail is a law student at the University of Connecticut, where he is also pursuing his MBA. In the years preceding law school, he studied economics and chemistry at the University of Houston, where he developed a mentorship program for economics students with a focus on mentors who were minority business owners. While at graduate school, he has worked with a number of nonprofit organizations and
small businesses on transactional matters and business planning, modeling, and process. His approach to economic justice is rooted in his belief that every person should have the equal opportunity to create a sufficient foundation upon which to build a dignified, dynamic, and productive life.

Kathy Flaherty (Panelist)
Kathy Flaherty has served as the executive director of Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc. (CLRP) since 2015. Prior to coming to CLRP, Kathy spent 12 years as a staff attorney at Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut, Inc., and at Connecticut Legal Services. She is a 1988 graduate of Wellesley College and received her Juris Doctorate from Harvard Law School in 1994. Kathy is the co-chair of the Keep the Promise Coalition, a coalition of advocates with a vision of a state in which people with mental health conditions are able to live successfully in the community because they have access to housing and other community-based supports and services that are recovery oriented, person-driven, and holistic in their approach to wellness. She is also a member of the steering committee of the Connecticut Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance, an alliance of people of all ages with all disabilities who pursue a unified agenda. She served on then-Governor Dannel Malloy’s Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, a 16-member panel of experts created by the governor to review current policies and make specific recommendations in the areas of public safety, with particular attention paid to school safety, mental health, and gun violence prevention. Kathy has also served on the Task Force to Improve Access to Legal Counsel in Civil Matters.

Jessica Frank (Panelist)
Jessica Frank is the A2J Author Project Manager for the Center for Computer-Assisted Legal Instruction (CALI). She oversees the development team for A2J Author and provides community outreach, technical support, and training resources to the automated document development community. Jessica joined the A2J Author team in 2012. She has a B.A. in History and Political Science from Marquette University and a J.D. from Chicago-Kent College of Law.

Creating Equal Opportunities: Raising Awareness About Equity and Mindfulness for Students with Disabilities and Those Needing Special Education
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act offer an opportunity for students with disabilities to have equal access to education. What role can a school play in teaching all students about equity and mindfulness? How can a parent or an advocate collaborate with their district to ensure an inclusive experience for their child? How can this all be done while maintaining a child’s dignity? This panel aims to discuss the ways in which schools, community leaders, and advocates can raise awareness about equity and mindfulness for students with disabilities and those needing special education in their respective communities.

Workshop Presenters
Jessica de Perio Wittman (Moderator)
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Kevin L. Booker Jr. is the founder of Booker Empowerment, LLC and has been an educator for 20 years. Kevin L. Booker Jr. is the founder of Booker Empowerment, LLC and has been an educator for 20 years. Kevin realized his passion for encouraging others who do not have a voice when he was 12 years old. At that young age, he committed to fighting for young people, understood the importance of helping others see their full potential, and dedicated himself to a life of seeking social justice. Kevin went on to achieve various degrees through the support of his family and strong mentors. He now teaches college and high school-level classes, trains men and women who have been sexually assaulted, facilitates leadership and diversity workshops, and lectures. He is a mentor and speaks publicly all over the country to encourage people to understand the power of education and using their voice to make positive change. He also volunteers regularly in the local elementary school, supporting reading instruction, something he has done for the last five years. Kevin has a strong passion related to diversity and inclusion in law librarianship and legal education. She received her J.D. from Seattle University School of Law and her M.L.S. from the University at Buffalo. Her research interests include special education and disability law, the incorporation of technology in lawyering and legal education, and law librarianship.

Penelope Petzold (Panelist)
Penelope Petzold practices exclusively in the area of special education for families of children with disabilities. She is a graduate of the Quinnipiac University School of Law. She is also a graduate of Wrightslaw's Institute of Special Education Advocacy through William & Mary Law School and of the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates’ New Attorney Training. She has volunteered for SpEdConnecticut, a nonprofit agency in Hartford that helps families of children with disabilities, and served as a family faculty member for the Leadership Excellence in Developmental Disabilities program and the Partners in Policymaking program at the UConn Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

Julie Swanson (Panelist)
Julie Swanson is a special education advocate dedicated to improving outcomes for children with disabilities throughout Connecticut. Julie is the president of Special Education Equity for Kids of Connecticut (SEEK), the first organization representing the parents of Connecticut’s more than 70,000 students receiving special education. She serves as a co-chair of the public relations committee for the Council of Parent Advocates and Attorneys (COPAA), a national organization that promotes special education advocacy. Additionally, she was a founding board member of Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment (CT-FEAT). Julie speaks frequently on special education matters and has a long-standing history of service on special education–related state boards, task forces, and legislative appointments to state councils. She is currently a long-standing member of Connecticut’s Transition Task Force and, most recently, a member of the Connecticut IEP Document Revision group. Julie is the co-author of *Your Special Education Rights: What Your School District Isn’t Telling You* and *Your Special Education Rights.com*, a video-based website that helps parents understand their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Typhanie Jackson (Panelist)
Director of Special Education, New Haven Public Schools

Explore the Advocate Within
In this workshop, attendees will develop skills and tools that will help them become better advocates for others. Participants will engage in activities that aid in the exploration of their own biases and how these biases may affect the way they educate and advocate for others. This workshop will strengthen the advocate within each individual. This is a great workshop for educators and individuals who work with children and their families.

Workshop Presenter
Kevin L. Booker Jr.
Kevin L. Booker Jr. is the founder of Booker Empowerment, LLC and has been an educator for 20 years. He is committed to uplifting and educating individuals. Kevin realized his passion for encouraging others who do not have a voice when he was 12 years old. At that young age, he committed to fighting for young people, understood the importance of helping others see their full potential, and dedicated himself to a life of seeking social justice. Kevin went on to achieve various degrees through the support of his family and strong mentors. He now teaches college and high school-level classes, trains men and women who have been sexually assaulted, facilitates leadership and diversity workshops, and lectures. He is a mentor and speaks publicly all over the country to encourage people to understand the power of education and using their voice to make positive change. He also volunteers regularly in the local elementary school, supporting reading instruction, something he has done for the last five years. Kevin has a strong passion
for encouraging others to stay positive through adversity and volunteers his time working with many individuals from various backgrounds.


Connecticut is one of the most segregated states in a country that remains highly segregated 51 years after the passage of the federal Fair Housing Act. In this lecture and discussion-style workshop, we will examine local, state, and federal policies that created and perpetuate our segregated housing system. We will consider the impacts of housing segregation on economic opportunity and quality of life. We will also consider effective advocacy strategies for improving equitable and fair access to safe, affordable housing.

**Workshop Presenter**

**Anika Singh Lemar**

Anika Singh Lemar is a clinical associate professor at Yale Law School. She teaches the Community and Economic Development clinic (CED), which provides transactional legal services to organizations seeking to advance economic opportunity. CED’s clients include affordable housing developers, community development financial institutions, farms and farmer’s markets, fair housing advocates, and neighborhood associations. From 2007 to 2013, she represented for-profit, not-for-profit, and governmental clients engaged in a variety of real estate projects including building affordable housing, remediating and redeveloping brownfields, and revitalizing urban neighborhoods. From 2005 to 2007, she was a Skadden Fellow and Staff Attorney at the Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center in New York. From 2004 to 2005, she served as a law clerk for the Honorable Janet C. Hall of the U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut. Professor Lemar received her B.A., cum laude, in Ethics, Politics, and Economics from Yale University and received her J.D., cum laude, from New York University School of Law where she was a Root-Tilden-Kern Scholar, a Dean’s Scholar, and a Robert McKay Scholar. While in law school, she received the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans and helped to found **Next City**, a highly-regarded urban affairs publication.

**How Art Can Reflect, Reimagine, and Revolutionize Equity**

This panel discussion will examine the relationship between art and equity and how the two interact. Featuring a panel of artists, this conversation will be led by Stacey Jill Zackin, who is the manager of WORK_SPACE, a collaborative coworking community in Manchester, Conn. that is committed to showcasing and supporting artists. From November 1 – December 26, 2019, WORK_SPACE is presenting a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Art Exhibition and Experience titled, “PERSPECTIVES: WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT, WE ARE ALL ONE.”

**Workshop Moderator**

**Stacey Jill Zackin, Ph.D., MSW, PCC**

Stacey is a Manchester, Conn. native, who after 19 years in Los Angeles is back in her hometown as the manager of the coworking community, WORK_SPACE. Municipally-owned and design to be part of the ongoing revitalization of Manchester’s downtown, WORK_SPACE offers professional development resources and personal support to help entrepreneurs clarify and implement their vision in a way that enhances their economic, social, and cultural capital. Stacey and her team strive to create a welcoming, inclusive, and hospitable environment for the variety of individuals and organizations that meet, learn, create, and work at WORK_SPACE.
Invest in the Long Game: The Power of Persistence

The objective of this workshop is to share strategies and tactics to make systematic change in schools across levels in a district. This workshop will include interactive activities throughout the session and conversations about privilege, status, and allyship. The facilitators will encourage participants to find their “why” in their work with students. Participants will learn about the power of persistence and the strategies it takes to motivate change in high-level district partnerships with key stakeholders. Participants will also learn about working with at-risk high school students to empower them with the skills to become leaders. Participants should expect to enter a safe space with an open mind to learn, grow, and share.

Workshop Presenters
Amina Brown and Mia Lilienthal
Amina Brown and Mia Lilienthal met in December 2016 while working for buildOn, an organization that engages high school students in Bridgeport, Connecticut to transform their neighborhoods through active community service. Amina is an alumnus of the University of Maryland and the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education. She taught in urban schools as a social studies teacher, coach, civic engagement coordinator, and content specialist. Mia is an alumnus of the University of Connecticut and has worked with students in nonprofit settings throughout her career. She is currently pursuing a master's in counseling with a concentration in school counseling.

Poison in the Soil: Dismantling Racism in the Classroom

School curriculum still involves extensive bias. For example, until a few years ago, elementary school lessons on the history of Connecticut focused exclusively on white people, ignoring the contributions of people of color. This didn’t change until parents and school faculty worked together to develop a new curriculum. After this curriculum was developed and implemented, parents and faculty worked together again to offer racial justice trainings to teachers, faculty, students, and parents. These trainings have now been held in three elementary schools, and there are plans to offer it at the district level in the fall. This kind of engagement allows schools to do the work of dismantling racism, using collaborative methods. One of the parent leaders in this work is workshop presenter, Kari Nicewander.

Explicit racism is still very much present in our schools, as well. For example, some students at Simsbury High School used blackface on a social media platform. This highlighted the work that had to be done to address racism among students in Simsbury. Parents, teachers, and community leaders worked together to create a comprehensive program, working in all aspects of the school, to offer anti-racism education, addressing the incident, while digging deeper into the root causes of racism. One of the parent leaders in this work is workshop presenter, George Harris.

In this workshop, teachers, parents, and community members will learn how to work together to modify curriculum and address racism in schools. They will learn to identify micro-aggressions, bias in curriculum, and cultural racism. Once this racism is identified, it can be dismantled. We need to unmask racism in order to eradicate it, and we must do this work together.

Workshop Presenters
Kari Nicewander
Kari Nicewander earned a B.A. from the University of Michigan and her Master of Divinity from Harvard University. In January 2015, she completed a three-year commitment living in Zambia, focusing on HIV/AIDS education and gender equity. She now serves as senior minister at Immanuel Congregational
Church, and is on the board of directors for Racial Justice Ministries, CTUCC. She has written articles in numerous publications and was a contributing author for Trans-Kin: A Guide for Family and Friends of Transgender People, which won the 2013 International Book Award for Gay and Lesbian Non-Fiction. Kari has worked on issues of racial justice and gender equity in domestic and international contexts, including Zambia, Ethiopia, Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua.

George Harris
George Harris holds a master’s in political science from the University of Hawaii, which he earned while serving in the U.S. Navy in Honolulu, and a master’s of divinity from Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. He came to First Church in Simsbury from South Church of New Britain, where he served as the lead pastor since 2007. For over 20 years, George has served and ministered in urban settings among vulnerable and marginalized people, including street youth, people living with HIV/AIDS, the homeless, and the urban poor. He was ordained by the United Church of Christ in 2007. George, his wife Lourdes, and his daughter Abby, are actively involved in the Simsbury community.

Through the Lens of Equity: Understanding Self, as We Understand One Another
In order to advance and promote equity, we must understand ourselves, our history, and its context. This workshop will provide learning experiences to deepen one’s understanding of this and more, using small group experiences and interactions that get to the core of understanding; and leads to personal growth and toward creating social change.

Techniques to guide conversations and group learning will be used as examples for attendees’ own uses and work. This interactive session will include one-on-one conversations on Identity and Perception, full group conversations on history and context, and a large group tactile exercise to promote understanding on privilege and life experience.

Objectives:
- Gain greater insight and understanding in how our identity and experience forms our views on self and others
- Address “The Lens of Equity” as a focus for our work in communities
- Experience activities that delve into equity and racism, using techniques participants can bring to their own work and lives
- Understand the role of the “Ally” in the work of racial equity
- Learn about The Parent Leadership Training Institute as a vehicle for racial equity and healing

Skills:
- Techniques to help build capacity of self and others to address race and equity and allyship
- Ability to identify, address, and discuss Identity as a starting point for civil conversation on topics of race and equity, and to understand the value of difference
- Understanding privilege and its impact on the work of racial equity
- How to use these activities in participants’ work toward achieving equity

Workshop Presenters
Melvette Hill
Melvette Hill is a parent, civic leader, and social justice warrior. She has over 20 years of experience engaging families in communities through her various roles in corporate, government, and nonprofit
organizations. Her areas of expertise include community and civic engagement, leadership development, and public policy. Melvette works with the National Parent Leadership Institute on communication strategies, and consults Connecticut and other states on the roles of parent leaders in the two-generational approach to family economic success and systems change. She also leads the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) in Connecticut, a family civics initiative. As a Harlem native, later relocating to Connecticut after marrying, Melvette grew up in a diverse, culturally and ethnically rich city that was equally as segregated. Her early experiences shaped her future views and continue to fuel her passion and commitment for racial equity, social change, and civic engagement. Melvette lives in Connecticut and is the mother of four young adults.

**Patti Keckeisen**
Patti Keckeisen, a parent leader and former corporate professional, shifted her career to parent leadership and civic engagement after personally participating in the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) in 1999 in Connecticut. Patti is the descendant of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and felt especially connected to her ancestors as a result of her PLTI experience, which brought together parents from 13 different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds for a transformative experience. Patti served as co-director of the National Parent Leadership Institute (NPLI) during NPLI’s early years, with Donna Thompson-Bennett, after working with communities around the country to implement the PLTI curriculum in California, Colorado, Maine, Rhode Island, Virginia, Wyoming, and the Wind River Indian Reservation. Patti currently serves as the director of quality for NPLI.

**Youth Voices: A Discussion About the Equity of Youth Experiences Regarding Race and Gender**
Despite the incredible advancements made by the modern feminism movement and an increase in participation and involvement of young people on the national scale, young women, and particularly young women of color, still face multiple barriers in society today. As three young women from different racial and ethnic backgrounds explore the inhibitions imposed on them by society, participants will learn about intersectionality through the lenses of race, gender, and age, and what it really means to be a young woman coming of age in a society with varying levels of consciousness of issues pertaining to their daily experiences. This workshop will be a combination of presentation, small group discussions, and interactive group activities.

**Workshop Presenters**
**Isabella Galm** is a senior at Hall High School in West Hartford. She serves as the student representative from her school on the West Hartford Board of Education. **Helen Nguyen** is a senior at Conard High School in West Hartford. She has led multiple conversations at her school, both with students and staff, regarding equity topics. Both Isabella and Helen are currently board members for the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ). **Abigail Butterick** is a senior at Windsor High School. She recently completed a year-long internship with the NCCJ, and is an alumnus of the American Legion Auxiliary Girls’ State program. All three have served as staff members for NCCJ ANYTOWN, a year-long leadership program that includes a six-day social justice educational experience.