



Professional Bios

Inaugural Cohort

The Accomplices & The Co-Conspirators

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Manuel
Acevedo

Manuel Acevedo is the Founder & CEO of HelpfulVillage.com, a UC Berkeley-affiliated company that helps older adults age in their own homes with support from their neighbors. Helpful Village serves tens of thousands of older adults across 25 states, with new Villages forming around the country each month.

In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Aging2.0 recognized Helpful Village as a top-10 global innovator in the fight against social isolation. Mr. Acevedo is committed to equipping Villages worldwide with the best tools to grow and make a meaningful impact in their local communities.

Mr. Acevedo holds a master's degree in Communication Systems (Computer Science) from EPFL Lausanne, Switzerland. According to the QS World University Rankings, EPFL ranked 14th globally across all fields in 2020/2021, while the Times Higher Education rankings placed EPFL 19th in the world for Engineering and Technology in 2020.

He launched the HelpfulVillage.com platform to help Villages operate efficiently and cost-effectively, enabling them to support organizations that help older adults age in place. In 2016, the company was recognized as one of the most promising startups at the University of California and was selected to join the UC Berkeley Launch Startup Accelerator that same year.

In 2021, Manuel founded a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization called Healthy Aging Villages for All (www.villagesforall.org), which aims to bring the benefits of the Village Movement to diverse neighborhoods. The organization's philosophy is that all older adults—regardless of ethnic background or socioeconomic status—should be able to age with dignity and maintain social engagement and good health.

In 2022, Manuel was awarded an American Society on Aging Rise Fellowship in recognition of his contributions to the field of aging and his efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.

Priority Area of Interest: Social Impact & Innovation

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Monique
Barber

Monique Barber, MPH, MBA, is passionate about empowering others to prioritize their individual health and wellness. She began her career in public health with a focus on improving individuals' health outcomes, enhancing the delivery of health services to vulnerable populations, and shaping health policy. She earned a Master of Public Health (MPH) with a concentration in Health Services Organization from The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston – School of Public Health. During her time there, she concentrated her work on fostering collaborative relationships among stakeholders in academic, governmental, and private sectors. She also holds a Master of Business Administration from Texas Woman's University.

As a career public health professional, Monique focuses on building organizational capacity and developing teams to deliver essential services and programs to underserved and vulnerable populations. In the field of aging services, she has held various leadership roles, managing programs that address the nutritional needs of older adults, foster socialization, and ensure access to basic necessities.

She is an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program.

Priority Area of Interest: Social Impact and Innovation

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Laing-Lin
Chao

Laing-Lin Chao is a Georgia State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Service Coordinator and Social Services Program Consultant III. Prior to her role in the Ombudsman program, Ms. Chao served as a Case Management Coordinator with the Iowa Area Agency on Aging and as an Aging Program Specialist with the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, where she compiled research, data, best practices, and potential policy solutions to address challenges facing older adults and individuals with disabilities.

Ms. Chao spent over ten years with the Iowa Area Agency on Aging, advocating on behalf of older adults and people with disabilities in collaboration with agency directors and state, regional, and local government officials in Iowa.

She has served on numerous committees and boards, including the Houston Gerontological Society, Georgia Gerontology Society, Statewide Georgia Aging & Disability Resource Connection Advisory Council, Atlanta Regional Commission Advisory Committee on Aging, United States Ombudsman Association Planning Committee, Georgia Association for Volunteer Administration Board, the American Society on Aging (ASA) Network on Environments, Services and Technologies (NEST), and the ASA Network of Multicultural Aging (NOMA) Council. She was also a featured speaker at the Third International Conference of Long-Term Care Directors and Administrators in 2016.

Ms. Chao holds a Bachelor of Health Science and a Master's Degree in Gerontology from Wichita State University, as well as a Dual Master of Public Health/Master of Business Administration from Walden University. Additionally, she is a Certified Care Manager (CMC) through the National Academy of Certified Care Managers, and has completed comprehensive coursework through the Society of Certified Senior Advisors (SCSA), earning the designation of Certified Senior Advisor (CSA). She is also an inaugural ASA RISE Fellow with the American Society on Aging.

Priority Area of Interest: Ageism and Culture

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Lauren
Garcia

Lauren Garcia is a Ph.D. student in Health Promotion Sciences in the School of Community and Global Health at Claremont Graduate University. She also serves as the assistant clinical trial manager and research coordinator for the Mary S. Easton Center for Alzheimer's Disease Research at UCLA. Over the past five years, Lauren has been conducting Phase II and Phase III clinical trials, as well as NIH-funded research studies related to Alzheimer's disease and memory loss at UCLA.

Through her work in Alzheimer's disease research, Ms. Garcia has developed a deep understanding of the minority aging community as a vulnerable population disproportionately affected by health disparities. She is committed to addressing the complex factors that contribute to these inequities and to developing community-based, culturally appropriate solutions.

Ms. Garcia holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology with an emphasis in Biomedical Sciences from Santa Clara University and a Master of Public Health from the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University. She is honored to be an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program.

Priority Area of Interest: Health & Well-being

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Lyn
Hakeem

Lyn Hakeem is the Co-CEO of L.A.M.P.S. (Love, Attitude, Motivation, Perseverance, Service), a nonprofit advocacy organization. She is currently self-employed and collaborates with the Hamilton Group, a collective of community advocates dedicated to creating opportunities for youth exposed to traumatic events to build skills in self-advocacy and resilience.

Ms. Hakeem holds a Master of Social Work from Louisiana State University, with a certification in Gerontology. She is passionate about advocacy for individuals who are disenfranchised, particularly in the areas of health equity and access to resources that support resilience and full inclusion in upward mobility. She cherishes spending time with elders in her community, seeking their wisdom and guidance throughout her life's journey.

She is also pursuing a Doctorate in Public Policy at Southern University and A&M College, with a concentration in Health Policy. Her thesis focuses on health disparities and social exclusion affecting the elderly African American population. In her free time, she enjoys listening to smooth jazz and gospel music, reading poetry, and attending the occasional poetry slam. She is proud to be an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program.

Priority Area of Interest Health & Well-being

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Erika
Jackson

Erika Jackson brings over 20 years of leadership experience in the senior living industry, having worked across corporate, divisional, regional, and community levels. She has successfully supported asset management, marketing, operations, and sales functions within both faith-based nonprofit and for-profit organizations.

Her professional background includes strategic leadership roles with national and regional providers such as Brookdale Senior Living, Holiday Retirement, Senior Lifestyle Corporation, and Bethel New Life. Ms. Jackson is a credentialed Tax Credit Specialist through the National Center for Housing Management and a Certified Marketing Professional through Life Services Network (now LeadingAge Illinois).

She is an engaged member of several professional organizations, including the American Society on Aging, The Gerontological Society of America, the International Federation on Ageing, and the American College of Healthcare Executives. She is also a member of Sigma Phi Omega, the international academic honor and professional society in gerontology, and is proud to be an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program.

Ms. Jackson holds a Bachelor of Arts in Marketing Communications from Purdue University and an MBA with a focus in Quantitative Methods and Management Sciences. Her person-centered leadership philosophy fuels her passion for inspiring and developing the next generation of servant leaders in the aging services field.

She has been featured in television, radio, and print media as an expert in the senior living industry, sharing insights on community engagement, lifestyle transitions, and senior housing options. A recognized thought leader in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion, she frequently speaks on these topics within the industry. In her commitment to serving older adults, Ms. Jackson also provides free consultative services through The Samaritan Solution, offering advocacy and education to support older adults and their families.

Priority Area of Interest: Equity & Justice

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Ocean
Le

Ocean Le is a Senior Program Coordinator at the Diverse Elders Coalition (DEC), where he facilitates communication between coalition members and project stakeholders, develops reports, briefs, memoranda, and other materials for public dissemination. He also manages and creates content for DEC's website and social media platforms and supports research translation and internal communications for the organization's caregiving initiatives.

Mr. Le holds a Bachelor of Arts in Marketing and a Master of Science in Human Nutrition from Columbia University Medical Center's Institute of Human Nutrition. As a first-generation American born to immigrant parents, he has personally experienced the linguistic and cultural barriers that many diverse older adults face both in the United States and internationally. He aspires to leverage his academic background and lived experience to drive meaningful change in the field of aging, across both clinical and social contexts.

Previously, Mr. Le served as a Graduate Research Assistant at Columbia University Medical Center's Department of Pathology and as a Research Intern with the John A. Hartford Foundation. He is proud to be an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program.

Mr. Le plans to continue his medical education with the goal of serving diverse older adults in a variety of care settings.

Priority Area of Interest: Ageism & Culture

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Alicia
Martinez

Alicia Martinez is a Disability & Aging Service Coordinator with Washington County in Oregon. In her role, she conducts assessments for Activities of Daily Living and coordinates in-home care services for older adults. Alicia is a proud graduate of the University of Oregon (Go Ducks!) with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology.

Her commitment to social and racial justice began during college, where she participated in marches for immigrant rights. Since then, she has remained deeply passionate about centering and elevating the voices of marginalized communities, always seeking personal and professional growth opportunities that support this mission.

With over 10 years of home-visiting experience, Ms. Martinez is dedicated to public service and uses a person-centered approach to meet the unique needs of every family she serves. She has also played a key role in organizing conferences for family caregivers and cultural celebrations for county staff.

A strong advocate for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), Ms. Martinez has served on multiple EDI committees. She is currently a member of the Equity Workgroup within the Health & Human Services Department and serves on the EDI Training Committee at the county level.

She is honored to be an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program.

Outside of work, Alicia enjoys hiking, exploring local coffee shops, and spending time along the Pacific Coast.

Priority Area of Interest: Equity & Justice

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Aubrey
Mentis

Aubrey Mentis is a passionate advocate for individuals who are often unable to advocate for themselves—particularly older adults. He serves as the Program Coordinator for the Going Home Program at the Sedgwick County Department on Aging, a federally funded initiative that helps individuals in long-term care facilities transition back into the community.

In this role, Mr. Mentis coordinates the transition process alongside managed care organizations (MCOs) and Social Services Coordinators. He assists with securing housing, providing household furnishings as needed, and conducting monthly follow-ups to ensure clients' ongoing needs are met.

He is deeply committed to the principle that older adults should be actively involved in decisions about where they live and how they manage their daily lives—areas in which they are too often excluded. He takes pride in being a professional in the field of aging, helping restore autonomy and dignity to the lives of older adults.

Mr. Mentis holds a Master's degree in Gerontology from Kansas State University, as well as a Bachelor of Arts and an Associate degree in Occupational Therapy from Newman University. He is honored to be an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program.

Outside of his professional work, Aubrey enjoys gardening, running, cycling, and collecting and listening to vinyl records.

Priority Area of Interest: Health & Well-being

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



**Samantha
Sousa**

Samantha Sousa serves as the Home Care Program Assistant Manager at Old Colony Elder Services (OCES) in Brockton, Massachusetts, where she oversees services for older adults and individuals with disabilities. Since joining OCES in 2013 as a Case Manager, she has been deeply committed to the agency's mission of helping older adults remain in their homes with dignity and independence through personalized in-home care services.

In 2016, Ms. Sousa was promoted to Home Care Program Supervisor, leading a team of five Case Managers. In this role, she provided individual supervision, coordinated team meetings and trainings, conducted performance evaluations, and ensured documentation and assessments met program standards. By 2019, she advanced to her current leadership role, where she manages daily operations of the Home Care department, tracks consumer data for quality assurance, and develops and implements program procedures to support service delivery and compliance.

Ms. Sousa is known for her creativity in addressing the unique needs of elders and her strong leadership style—supporting staff through hands-on involvement, constructive feedback, and regular recognition. She plays an active role on the agency's Cultural Competency Committee and serves as a key liaison for several specialized programs within OCES.

With more than 15 years of experience in Social Services, Ms. Sousa holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Stonehill College in Easton, MA. She is a dedicated advocate for older adults, a community-oriented leader, and a proud single mother of two. She is honored to be an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program.

Priority Area of Interest: Health & Well-being

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Shaunise Spivey

Shaunise Spivey, MHR, SHRM-SCP, serves as Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA), a federally and locally funded nonprofit that supports more than 140,000 older adults and adults with disabilities each year. With a workforce of over 400 employees, PCA is a cornerstone agency in the aging services network in Philadelphia.

Ms. Spivey joined PCA in 2014 as a Human Resources Generalist and quickly rose through the ranks, serving as Director of Human Resources and then as Vice President of Human Resources, Diversity and Inclusion before being appointed COO. Throughout her tenure, she has been instrumental in shaping a more inclusive, culturally competent, and development-focused workplace.

A lifelong advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion, Ms. Spivey has led agency-wide cultural competency training and implemented initiatives that reflect PCA's diverse and multigenerational workforce—more than 74% of whom are women. Her leadership has been essential in creating an equitable organizational culture that supports both staff and the older adult community PCA serves.

She has championed employee development and cultural transformation, helping to launch a grassroots mentoring program that connects emerging talent with leadership, and co-leading the rollout of a customer experience initiative through PCA's Culture Change Committee.

Before joining PCA, Ms. Spivey spent a decade at the national law firm Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP. Her career prior to 2003 included leadership roles in the for-profit and global sectors, bringing over 20 years of experience in human resources, business operations, and organizational leadership.

Ms. Spivey holds a Master's degree in Human Resources Management and a Bachelor's in Business Administration from Strayer University. In 2016, she earned her Human Resources Management Certification from Villanova University and received her SHRM Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP) designation.

Originally from Queens, NY, she now resides in New Jersey with her family. Ms. Spivey is also an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program, a national leadership development initiative focused on advancing equity in aging.

Priority Area of Interest: Equity & Justice

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Earnestine Thomas

Earnestine Thomas, MSW, is a Caregiver Specialist with the Howard County Office on Aging and Independence in Columbia, Maryland. In this role, she provides critical support services for family caregivers under the Older Americans Act National Family Caregiver Support Program. Her work includes facilitating individual counseling, coordinating support groups, delivering caregiver training, and forging community partnerships through strategic outreach.

Ms. Thomas holds a Bachelor of Social Work from Bowie State University and a Master of Social Work from the University of Maryland, Baltimore. She is currently completing her Doctor of Social Work (DSW) at Capella University, School of Public Education. With plans to integrate her expertise as a master trainer of evidence-based self-management programs, she aims to develop accessible community workshops that promote education and empowerment.

Her social work experience spans a variety of settings, including home and community-based programs, case management, informal counseling, psychoeducation, in-home services coordination, mental health first aid instruction, and program development. She has also served as a field instructor and mentor for MSW students, advocating strongly for both older adults and their caregivers.

A member of the National Society of Leadership and Success, Ms. Thomas is pursuing advanced and executive leadership certifications, further reinforcing her commitment to public service and professional excellence.

An inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE, Ms. Thomas is deeply passionate about addressing ageism—especially within social work education—and promoting mental health awareness in the community. She is dedicated to nurturing the next generation of social workers and those committed to making a meaningful impact.

Outside of her professional work, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, serving in her church, hiking, and watching great films.

Priority Area of Interest: Ageism & Culture

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Christopher C. Turner

Christopher C. Turner is the Associate State Director of Community Engagement and Outreach for AARP Florida, where he leads outreach efforts across Northwest Florida, with a focused commitment to serving BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and Veteran communities within the 50+ population.

A graduate of Florida State University, Mr. Turner brings a robust background in legislative policy, advocacy, and volunteer management. His career includes experience as a policy analyst within the Florida Legislature, as well as work as a registered lobbyist and grassroots volunteer manager for a national nonprofit organization.

Mr. Turner is an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE, reflecting his leadership in advancing equity and inclusion in aging-related work.

He lives in Tallahassee, Florida, with his wife, their two children, and their cat. In his personal time, Mr. Turner enjoys theater, wine tastings, and competing in endurance events, including marathons and triathlons. He is also active in his community, serving on local boards, fundraising for cancer research, coaching high school cross country, and supporting his children's passions for dance and theater.

Priority Area of Interest: Equity & Justice

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Dr. Karon Uzzell-Baggett

Dr. Karon Uzzell-Baggett is a licensed and certified Occupational Therapist based in Nashville, Tennessee, with a deep passion for serving older adults, women, veterans, and communities of color. A dynamic professional, she is also a wife, mother, stepmother, retired United States Air Force officer, and former college administrator. Dr. Uzzell-Baggett began her distinguished career as a military officer after graduating from the Reserve Officer Training Corps Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Over her military tenure, she held progressive leadership positions and was stationed across the United States, Germany, Italy, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan, earning multiple honors and awards for her service.

Following her military retirement in 2011, she transitioned to academia, joining Tennessee State University, where she empowered a diverse student body with essential career development skills and cultivated robust partnerships with local, regional, and national organizations.

Inspired by a life-changing mission trip to Haiti, Dr. Uzzell-Baggett pursued her long-held dream of entering the healthcare field. She earned her Doctorate in Occupational Therapy from Belmont University and gained hands-on experience in pediatrics, inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation, and skilled nursing care. She has also obtained several specialized certifications in healthcare and professional development.

In 2020, she founded Specialized Occupational Therapy Services (SpOTs) LLC, a private practice dedicated to reducing health disparities and reimagining geriatric care to improve outcomes for historically underserved populations.

An inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program, Dr. Uzzell-Baggett continues to be an advocate for equity and innovation in health and aging. Outside of her professional work, she enjoys volunteering, traveling, and spending quality time with her husband of 32 years, their daughter, and their beloved rescue dog.

Priority Area of Interest: Health & Well-being

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



Keri
Vogtmann

Keri Vogtmann is a Director of Project Management at Blink, a leading user experience research and design agency. With over 20 years of tri-sector experience, she brings deep expertise in program execution, stakeholder management, process improvement, and cross-functional collaboration across corporate, public, and nonprofit domains.

Ms. Vogtmann began her journey in policy and international affairs through her graduate studies at UC San Diego, where she earned a Master of Pacific International Affairs degree. Her career launched globally—while living in Singapore, she managed the first Asia Pacific deployment of a procurement solution for Hewlett-Packard, spanning 13 countries. Upon returning to the U.S., she continued building international bridges, serving as Chairperson for her city’s Sister City International organization, fostering cultural understanding and global partnerships.

A Japanese-American whose parents were interned during World War II, Ms. Vogtmann is driven by a personal mission to uplift marginalized communities, ensure equity and inclusion, and advocate for the underserved. As a Veterans Affairs IT consultant, she led a development team under a Presidential executive order to enhance the VA’s electronic medical records system, improving support for veterans at high risk for suicide.

Over the past decade, Ms. Vogtmann has become a leading advocate in gerontechnology (“agetech”), aiming to close digital and generational divides. She has served as an Ambassador with Aging2.0, an Adult & Aging Commissioner for Sacramento County, and as Digital Inclusion Program Manager, leading user research to assess how technology impacts older adults and social isolation.

Her innovation leadership was recognized globally when she and her team won first place at EIT Health’s “Innovation Solutions in Aging Populations” competition in Denmark, for developing a diabetes education and management app for older adults. Keri’s work consistently sits at the intersection of technology, aging, and equity. Whether in her nonprofit endeavors or her professional role in design, she is committed to developing thoughtful, human-centered solutions that improve the aging journey for older adults and historically underrepresented populations.

She is proud to be an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging’s ASA RISE program.

Priority Area of Interest: Social Impact & Innovation

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE ACCOMPLICES



**Jerry
Zuniga**

Jerry Zuniga is an affordable housing professional with over 15 years of experience serving vulnerable communities through national nonprofit organizations including Rebuilding Together and Habitat for Humanity. He currently holds the position of Director of Housing Preservation & Aging Services at Habitat for Humanity Greater Fresno Area, where he leads programs aimed at improving safe and healthy housing outcomes for older adults and underserved populations.

Mr. Zuniga is a recognized subject matter expert in Housing Rehabilitation and Aging in Place interventions, and serves as an advisory council member for the Fresno-Madera Area Agency on Aging. His work focuses on implementing sustainable, community-based strategies to enable aging with dignity and independence.

He is a Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) and the co-developer of “Safe Home/Healthy Home,” an elective course in the National Council on Aging’s (NCOA) Aging Mastery Program (AMP). The course is currently offered in senior and community centers across the United States, empowering older adults with knowledge and practical tools for safer living environments.

Mr. Zuniga’s work bridges housing, health, and aging policy, and he is a passionate advocate for equitable, aging-friendly housing solutions. He is honored to be an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging’s ASA RISE program.

Priority Area of Interest: Social Impact & Innovation

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Deidre
Daymon

Deidre Daymon serves as the Assistant Director of Health, Wellness, and Project Enhance at Sound Generations, a role she has held since 2009. In this position, she supports the delivery and implementation of nationally recognized evidence-based programs that promote the health and well-being of older adults and individuals with disabilities.

Ms. Daymon provides comprehensive leadership in training, supervision, fidelity monitoring, and service coordination across a range of local and national initiatives. Her expertise has been integral to research collaborations, including her role on the community-academic partner team for two behavioral change trials and her leadership of a national pilot program for remote delivery of “A Matter of Balance,” a fall prevention initiative.

With a strong foundation in community engagement and evidence-based practices, Deidre has also worked directly with older adults at senior centers and has trained wellness leaders nationwide. She is particularly committed to developing diverse and culturally relevant aging programs to enhance health outcomes and reduce disparities across communities.

Deidre brings a unique blend of strategic thinking, leadership, and positive energy to her work, which allows her to address complex challenges and drive meaningful change. She is passionate about connecting older adults to resources and opportunities that empower them to thrive, recognizing the vital knowledge and experience they offer future generations. She is a proud inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging’s ASA RISE program.

Priority Area of Interest: Health & Well-being

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Sarah
Galvan

Sarah Galvan is the Directing Attorney for Justice in Aging’s Elder Rights team. She has over a decade of experience in legal services delivery and advancing elder rights initiatives for older adults. In her current role, she provides project coordination for the National Center on Law and Elder Rights (NCLER)—a federally funded resource center supported by the Administration for Community Living that delivers training and technical assistance to more than 50,000 legal and aging services professionals nationwide. Sarah also leads Justice in Aging’s elder rights advocacy work, centering policies and practices that are trauma-informed, equitable, and reflective of the diverse lived experiences of older adults.

A strong advocate for access to justice, Sarah believes in the power of legal information to uplift marginalized communities. Outside her work at Justice in Aging, she serves on the board of the Center for Elder Law & Justice and is a trained tutor in adult education and basic literacy strategies.

She is a proud inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging’s ASA RISE program.

Priority Area of Interest: Equity & Justice

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Shani
Gilmore

Shani Gilmore, DPM, serves as the Executive Long-Term Care Administrator at The Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA). With over 20 years of experience in the social services field—13 of which have been in the aging network—Ms. Gilmore brings a strong clinical and administrative background to her role. She earned a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine from Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine and holds a bachelor's degree in biology with a minor in psychology from Rowan University.

Although she completed a year of surgical residency at the Baltimore and Washington D.C. Veterans Affairs Hospital, Ms. Gilmore chose to follow her passion for social services. Since joining PCA in 2008 as a Care Manager, she has steadily advanced through leadership roles including Supervisor, Assistant Director, Director, and now Executive Administrator.

A committed advocate for professional development, Ms. Gilmore is a 2015 graduate of the Leadership Development Institute sponsored by P4A. She served on the Executive Board for “Leading Up,” a PCA initiative to support staff growth, and co-facilitated the mentorship program it launched—serving as a mentor herself. A founding member and former Treasurer of PCA Toastmasters, she continues her leadership work today as Treasurer on the Board of Directors for PCA Care Connections.

She is a proud inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program.

Priority Area of Interest: Health & Well-being

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Ryann
Hill

Ryann Hill is the Manager of Federal Policy and Government Relations at SCAN Health Plan, a not-for-profit Medicare Advantage plan dedicated to helping older adults stay healthy and independent. In this role, she leads the organization's federal and state policy strategy for Medicare and Medicaid and works closely with lawmakers to shape policies that improve health outcomes for aging populations.

Ms. Hill holds a bachelor's degree in Health Policy from Carnegie Mellon University and a Master of Public Health with a concentration in Health Policy from The George Washington University. She is actively engaged in several professional and civic organizations, including the Junior League of Washington, Women in Government Relations, the Society of Health Policy Young Professionals, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

Originally from Chicago, she currently resides in Prince George's County, Maryland.

She is a proud inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program.

Priority Area of Interest: Health & Well-being

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Jennifer
Horn

Jennifer M. Horn, MSW, received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Colorado State University – Pueblo and earned her Master of Social Work from Newman University. She is a published co-author in the *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, where she explored grit and retention at Hispanic Serving Institutions.

Jennifer's current research and practice center on the experiences of older LGBTQIA+ adults, including those residing in long-term care facilities and the broader community. Her work also focuses on LGBTQIA+ caregivers, Veterans, and intergenerational programs. She brings extensive experience supporting older adults living with terminal illness, mental health diagnoses, and those from historically marginalized communities.

She is actively involved in several advocacy and advisory groups, including the Pikes Peak Elder Abuse Coalition, Pikes Peak Commission on Aging, Colorado Center on Aging, Ethics and Behavioral Health Committee, Work Culture Committee, and various initiatives addressing underserved populations. She also serves on the 2022 NASW Standards for Social Work Services in Long-Term Care Facilities Taskforce and the American Society on Aging's Equity and Justice Advisory Council.

A committed advocate for older adults in Colorado and beyond, Jennifer is a proud inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program.

Priority Area of Interest: Equity & Justice

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Ross
Howard

Ross Howard is a Resident Social Services Coordinator with The Associated Management Company (TAMC), where he serves as a critical support system for older adults in Detroit's low-income housing communities. In this role, he connects elderly residents with external services to maintain their independence and stability—particularly by helping them access and retain housing vouchers.

Driven by personal experience and a passion for advocacy, Mr. Howard works tirelessly to cut through bureaucratic red tape and dispel the confusion surrounding entitlement programs. His dedication is rooted in witnessing older adults in his family and community struggle to navigate housing and social services without adequate information or guidance.

As a result of his advocacy, many older adults in Detroit have gained access to essential services such as VA spousal benefits, respite care, and hospice and palliative care. Known for his leadership within both his family and community, Mr. Howard frequently speaks at schools, PTAs, and senior gatherings, educating and empowering others with his knowledge of housing systems. His expertise has helped secure funding through HUD and MSHDA grants to support critical services.

Mr. Howard holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Olivet College and a master's degree in healthcare/gerontology.

He is a proud inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program.

Priority Area of Interest: Social Impact & innovation

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Norman
Jackson

Norman Jackson, Ph.D.(c), MS, is a lecturer in the School of Social Work at San Diego State University (SDSU) and Program Director at the UC San Diego Center for Criminality, Addiction Research, Training & Application. He also serves as the Gerontology Coordinator at SDSU, where he works to elevate student engagement in addressing the needs of an aging society, with an emphasis on improving outcomes for vulnerable and at-risk older adults across public and private sectors.

In his multifaceted role, Mr. Jackson leads training initiatives, curriculum development, and program coordination in the areas of substance use, public health, and criminal justice. His previous positions include Educational Specialist II for the California Department of Health Services Immunization Branch and Supervising Communicable Disease Investigator for San Diego County's Community Epidemiology Unit. He also supports community rehabilitation efforts, offering expungement relief referrals to formerly incarcerated individuals seeking employment and reintegration.

Mr. Jackson earned his Master of Science in Health and Human Services from SDSU and is currently completing a Ph.D. in Health Psychology, with dissertation research focused on attitudes toward preconception counseling among African American men. His academic and professional background spans over 25 years of public health promotion and education in both nonprofit and government settings.

A lifelong advocate for health equity, Mr. Jackson is deeply committed to reducing disparities affecting communities of color, underserved populations, and older adults.

He is a proud inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program, dedicated to expanding BIPOC leadership in the field of aging.

Priority Area of Interest: Equity & Justice

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Kim

Johnson-Prince

Kim Johnson-Prince, JD, MSW, serves as the Ombudsman Services Coordinator and Trainer for the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program in Atlanta, Georgia. In this role, she oversees the certification and re-certification of Long-Term Care Ombudsman representatives and Senior Certified Volunteers across the state. She leads the development and implementation of training curricula and is responsible for managing all statewide training contracts, billing, and reimbursement processes. Kim also acts as the primary liaison with the Department of Aging Services budgeting personnel, administering initial contracts and amendments.

With over a decade of experience in the field of aging, Ms. Johnson-Prince has dedicated her career to championing the rights and dignity of older adults and people with disabilities. Her prior roles include Long-Term Care Ombudsman Representative, Medicaid Case Manager in West Alabama, and Privacy Officer for a local Area Agency on Aging, where she led HIPAA compliance training for employees, medical professionals, contractors, and partners.

Ms. Johnson-Prince holds a Juris Doctor from the Birmingham School of Law and a Master of Social Work from the University of Alabama. Her combined expertise in law, social work, and elder care fuels her unwavering commitment to advocating for those whose voices are too often unheard.

A proud inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program, she continues to empower and protect vulnerable populations through leadership, legal insight, and a deep passion for justice in aging services.

Priority Area of Interest: Social Impact & Innovation

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Desiree
Lapahie

Desiree Lapahie is a Data Analyst at the National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA), bringing five years of experience in the aging sector. A proud member of the Navajo Nation, she holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics with a minor in Business Management from the University of New Mexico.

From caregiver to analyst, Ms. Lapahie is a passionate advocate for American Indian older adults, working to improve access to comprehensive health care, social services, and economic wellbeing. Her work is centered on data-driven advocacy and policy recommendations that amplify the voices of Native elders. She specializes in building meaningful partnerships with American Indian communities and organizations, ensuring culturally responsive and inclusive solutions.

Ms. Lapahie is an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program, where she continues to lead with integrity, cultural humility, and a strong commitment to equity in aging services.

Priority Area of Interest: Economic Security

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Kelly G.
Loeb

Kelly G. Loeb, MSW, is an Older Adult Care Manager and Medicare Counselor with Jewish Family Services of Greater Kansas City, where she provides education, resources, and support in both English and Spanish to help older adults and their families age with dignity and achieve the highest quality of life.

She holds a Master's in Social Work from the University of Kansas and a Bachelor's in English from the University of Missouri, embracing both sides of the state line—though Los Angeles, California will always be home. Since 2011, Ms. Loeb has served as a SHIP (State Health Insurance Assistance Program) counselor and educator, offering impartial guidance to Medicare beneficiaries, helping them navigate health insurance options for cost-effective, comprehensive, and convenient care.

Ms. Loeb is a passionate health equity advocate and serves on the Board of Directors for the Alzheimer's Association - Heart of America Chapter. In 2002, she founded and continues to facilitate a support group for Black families caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's and other dementias in Kansas City's urban core.

Known for her enthusiastic and engaging public speaking style, Ms. Loeb brings warmth, humor, and depth to every presentation. A highlight of her community engagement was being named Ms. Juneteenth KC 2021, honoring her long-standing commitment to service and care.

An inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program, Ms. Loeb is deeply committed to building a future where health care is affordable, comprehensive, and compassionate—and where Alzheimer's disease is just a memory.

Priority Area of Interest: Health & Well-being

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Glenda
Love

Glenda Love, MSW, LSW, is an energetic advocate for older adults, racial equity, and social justice. She currently serves as the Aging & Disability Rights Specialist at AgeGuide in Northeastern Illinois, where she functions as the program liaison for Adult Protective Services, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, legal services, and Kane County initiatives.

With a Master's degree in Social Work specializing in gerontology, Ms. Love brings over a decade of dedicated experience to the aging field. Her passion was ignited during her six years working in a long-term care facility, and she has since held key roles including Senior Case Manager for a state waiver program and Transition Engagement Specialist for a federal demonstration initiative. Her expertise spans program management and evaluation, discharge planning, mobility management, volunteerism, workforce development, and senior health insurance counseling. She is also a fierce advocate in the areas of housing, elder abuse, and fraud prevention.

In 2020, Ms. Love received the Illinois TRIAD Kathleen Quinn Award, recognizing her outstanding commitment to coalition building and fostering information-sharing networks that promote elder abuse education, policy, and practice. She is a unifying force who brings together agencies and disciplines to deliver holistic support for older adults.

Ms. Love currently serves on the Illinois TRIAD Board, actively participates in four local TRIAD groups, co-chairs a social services provider group, and is a member of an African American community coalition. In 2021, she completed a Certificate in Non-Profit Management from the University of Illinois Chicago.

A proud inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program, Ms. Love continues to lead with purpose and passion, strengthening community networks and systems that support the dignity, safety, and rights of older adults.

Priority Area of Interest: Equity & Justice

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Lauren
Ruiz

Lauren Ruiz is a seasoned patient advocate, care navigator, and public health professional dedicated to improving access to and the quality of care for individuals impacted by complex and chronic conditions. She holds dual Bachelor of Arts degrees in Political Science and Mass Communications (English Writing focus) from Virginia Tech.

Ms. Ruiz's career has spanned work as a Certified Application Counselor under the Affordable Care Act and as a certified financial counselor, equipping her with a deep understanding of healthcare systems and barriers to access. She is driven by opportunities to make both individual-level impacts and system-wide improvements in the health and social support sectors.

With a strong background in program development and team leadership, Ms. Ruiz has successfully managed large teams of patient navigators, secured grant funding for innovative care models, and mentored rising public health professionals. She is especially passionate about building coalitions of individuals living with complex conditions and their caregivers, helping them engage in community and legislative advocacy.

Her professional strengths lie in public speaking, community engagement, and collaborative leadership. Ms. Ruiz believes that collaboration, passion, and empathy are the most powerful tools to drive meaningful and lasting change.

Outside of work, she remains actively engaged in volunteering, contributing to Medicare education and assistance programs, caregiver support groups, advocacy organizations, and environmental conservation efforts in her local community.

Ms. Ruiz is proud to be an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program, where she joins a distinguished group of emerging leaders working to advance equity and innovation in aging.

Priority Area of Interest: Ageism & Culture

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Zaire
Sims

Zaire Sims, LMSW, is a Licensed Master Social Worker with five years of experience serving diverse populations across outpatient and inpatient mental health settings as well as in aging services. She currently serves as a Service Coordinator for Meals on Wheels of Southwest Ohio and Northern Kentucky, where she is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for older adults.

Ms. Sims has received multiple recognitions from the Council on Aging, including the Service Excellence Award, in acknowledgment of her commitment to impactful, compassionate care. Known for her positive attitude and creative problem-solving, she brings energy and innovation to the social work field.

She earned her Master of Social Work degree from the University of Cincinnati in 2020 and her Bachelor of Science in Social Work from The Ohio State University in 2017. While at Ohio State, she was honored with the inaugural Young Scholars Program Outstanding Senior Award, now named in her honor, recognizing her academic excellence and dedication to service. In 2019, she was also awarded the Association for Professionals in Aging Scholarship.

Ms. Sims is an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program, where she is part of a national network of leaders advancing equity in aging. Outside of her professional work, she enjoys kayaking, camping, and traveling, continually seeking new experiences that deepen her connection to community and well-being.

Priority Area of Interest: Health & Well-being

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Norell
Wheeler

Norell Wheeler, MPH/MBHS, is a seasoned Public and Behavioral Health Sciences professional with over 25 years of experience, currently serving as a Consultant with the Family Caregiver Alliance. Her work is anchored in a deep commitment to social justice, health equity, and the advancement of aging and caregiving services across diverse communities.

Ms. Wheeler holds dual graduate degrees in Public Health (MPH) and Behavioral Health Sciences (MBHS), and served as Vice President of the Population Health Sciences Student Association for three years. Throughout her academic and professional journey, she has led and supported numerous community-focused initiatives, including organizing a Habitat for Humanity park transformation, developing a health and wellness directory for a faith-based organization, and addressing food insecurity through her work in "Food as Medicine" coalitions aimed at eliminating food deserts.

As a keynote speaker for the University of San Francisco's 2018 Black History Month Celebration, Ms. Wheeler presented on the mental health and emotional well-being of Black males, highlighting critical health disparities. Internationally, she has volunteered in Africa on women's empowerment projects and caregiver respite initiatives, emphasizing maternal and child health education.

Ms. Wheeler actively serves on county-based Senior Care Commissions and Healthy Brain Initiative partnerships, advocating for aging adults through policy, programming, and public education. She is particularly interested in the intersection of environmental justice, man-made disasters, and their long-term impact on older adults. Most recently, she has focused on rural caregiver support and multigenerational adult-centered programming, and is exploring creative aging—how the arts can serve as a tool to combat ageism and support emotional wellness.

Ms. Wheeler is an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program, contributing to a national movement to advance equity in aging.

Priority Area of Interest: Ageism & Culture

ASA RISE COHORT 1: THE CO-CONSPIRATORS



Julia Yarbough

Julia Yarbough is an Emmy Award-winning broadcast journalist and communications consultant/talent coach with Magid Associates, bringing over 25 years of experience in newsrooms across the country, including major markets like Los Angeles and Miami. With a lifelong passion for storytelling that highlights collaboration and positive change, Julia now dedicates her voice and expertise to mentoring the next generation of journalists and raising awareness around aging, caregiving, and eldercare.

Her transition from journalist to eldercare advocate was inspired by her nearly 20-year journey as a family caregiver for her elderly mother. That lived experience shaped her commitment to supporting others navigating the complexities of caregiving and aging services. Recognizing the power of storytelling to educate and empower, Julia founded Keeping it REAL Caregiving—a multimedia platform that includes a website, blog, podcast, public speaking series, and bi-weekly newsletter. Through this platform, she produces content that elevates the voices of caregivers and highlights the systemic and emotional challenges they face.

Julia's journalism career has earned her numerous accolades, including two Emmy Awards, honors from the Society of Professional Journalists, and fellowships with the Gerontological Society of America and the Institute for Journalism & Natural Resources. Her work consistently blends journalistic excellence with a deep personal connection to the issues she covers.

A native of Fairfield, California, Julia earned her Bachelor of Science in Economics from the University of California, Santa Barbara. She currently resides in Chico, California, with her significant other, where she continues to be a caregiver—not only to people, but also to the family's elderly cat and seven chickens.

Julia is an inaugural Fellow of the American Society on Aging's ASA RISE program, further advancing her mission to bring real-world caregiving stories to the forefront of aging policy and public dialogue.

Priority Area of Interest: Social Impact & Innovation