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# Leadership

ers, Staff, and our Board of Directors work together to help ARISE grow and realize our healthy, thriving Southeast Asian community in Rhode Island.



Founding Youth Leaders, ARISE 2017



# OUR STAFF



## CHANDA WOMACK, MPA

**Executive Director | she/her/hers | [chanda@ariseducation.org](mailto:chanda@ariseducation.org)**

Chanda Womack is the Founding Executive Director of the Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education (ARISE.) The intersection as a Cambodian Refugee woman and mom of two bi-racial (Black Cambodian) children have shaped her ideologies, advocacy and leadership. These identity markers fuel how she shows up, occupies and stands just for education justice but for all issues that impact the historical community. She is unapologetic for what she stands for and how she carries it. Her leadership and movement building has garnered local and national recognition for ARISE and Rhode Island. Mostly recently she was named the 2020 recipient of A Leadership Journey's, Mary Marsh "Community Award," ARISE & her leadership was [named in Providence Morning Watch in 2020.](#) In 2017, Chanda was the recipient of NAACP Thurgood Marshall, the YWCA's Women in Achievement Award and the Providence Youth Student Movement POWER Award.

Chanda was conceived and born in a refugee camp in Thailand, immigrating to the United States in January of 1981 with her family. Chanda is married to Tiger Womack, her husband of over 14 years and has a daughter Amaya and son named Justice. She is a product of the Providence Public Schools and earned a B.A. degree from the University of Rhode Island in 2004. She has a Masters of Public Administration also from the University of Rhode Island as well as a graduate certificate in Nonprofit Leadership from Rhode Island College. She is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Leadership in Schooling from UMASS, Lowell.



## NGAN NGUYEN, MAT

**Deputy Director of Antiracist Programming & Curriculum | she/her/hers | [ngan@ariseducation.org](mailto:ngan@ariseducation.org)**

Ngan was born in Vietnam and immigrated to Minnesota when she was eight years old. She graduated from Macalester College with a Bachelor of Arts in Ethnic Studies and Educational Studies. She went on to receive a Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in History/Social Studies at Brown University. She served as the Deputy Director for the Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education. She developed a leadership relationship with the

× Schools District. She is currently a 6th grade social studies  
lyn Center Community Schools in Minnesota and a consultant  
irriculum is community-based and healing centered, and her  
ed by culturally responsive and culturally relevant pedagogy.



## NANCY XIONG

**Program Manager | she/her/hers | [nancy@ariseducation.org](mailto:nancy@ariseducation.org)**

Nancy Xiong is a child of Hmong genocide survivors and was born in Providence, Rhode Island. During the Secret War in Laos and the Vietnam War, Nancy's parents, grandparents, and relatives fought against the Pathet Lao Party in Laos. Nancy's parents arrived in the United States with freedom and opportunities. Yet those opportunities were nonexistent as they knew no one, struggled with the language barrier, and experienced difficulty adapting to this new land called home. They were not equipped with the necessary tools for survival. As a multilingual learner, Nancy navigated the education system mostly alone. These life-changing experiences were traumatic in her life and enabled her to develop resiliency as a first-generation college student. Nancy is empowered to create pathways for her community to break the cycle of poverty and intergenerational trauma. She formulates opportunities for the next generations to thrive, not just survive by cultivating a space for us to heal.



## NIAMIAH JEFFERSON

**Lead Organizer | she/her/hers | [niamiah@ariseducation.org](mailto:niamiah@ariseducation.org)**

Niamiah Jefferson is a resilient Black Woman from Cranston Rhode Island that is a recent graduate from Ponaganset High School. Currently, she is a freshman at Wheaton College. Niamiah is majoring in sociology and business with a concentration in diversity and inclusion and is on track to be a Taylor and Lane social justice scholar. One quote Niamiah embodies is "Gaining knowledge is the first step to wisdom, and sharing it is the first step to humanity." As an ever-evolving individual, Niamiah has a deep desire to learn and constantly work to further educate herself. Since she is a strong believer in liberation through education, she uses what she learns to spread her knowledge to others. In being a part of ARISE for over 3 years, not only has Niamiah been given space to use and amplify her voice but she pays it forward by holding space for other youth to be unapologetically them.

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## ZOE FUAD

**Communications Organizer | she/her/hers | zoe@ariseducatio**

Like many, Zoe carries within her a knotted tangle of immigratic diasporas; equal halves Chinese-Indonesian and Taiwanese-Te heritage and history remains a hazy mystery to herself. She wa: ARISE for its community, whose warmth and mutual care was se for its full embrace of minoritized people’s histories, experience She’s always been drawn to the sort of advocacy that involves in both structural analysis and structural change, for it allows us individualistic mindset that lays the blame of marginalization on marginalized. Having grown up disabled for the better part of h knows what it is to feel burdensome on others, and is so gratef constant intentionality in fostering self-love – a self-love that’s a redirect her energy to changing the systems that made such lo first place.

Prior to coming to ARISE, Zoe worked as Community Engagem the Future Leaders Incubator. She also organizes on-campus (v campaigning to end required standardized test scores), and be the necessity of deinstitutionalizing knowledge. Believing that r one effective route of making knowledge accessible, she’s currently studying digital communities at Brown, and is due to graduate in December 2023.



## O’SHA L. WILLIAMS

**Anti-Racist Educator | she/her/hers | osha@ariseducation.org**

O’Sha is a rising adult welcomed into youth-led spaces to listen, learn and labor towards the world that youth envision. Centering education as her field of greatest passion, O’Sha works with youth in community organizations and the classroom. Together, they work to achieve equitable experiences for each and every learner through analysis, advocacy and activism. O’Sha began teaching English as a New Language (ENL) to high school multilingual learners in Rhode Island’s Providence Public School District. Since the onset of the pandemic, O’Sha relocated to her home city of New York and now teaches English to middle schoolers in Canarsie, Brooklyn. With nearly a decade of Rhode Island residency, O’Sha remains deeply invested in her RI community and supports virtually and in-person as much as is safe and possible. Through remote and in-person instruction and education policy advocacy, O’Sha promotes thoughtful and intentional educational experiences for all students, especially students experiencing linguistic challenges to learning in an English-dominant academic nal policy aster’s degree



On Policy from Brown University as well as a Masters in Rhode Island College.



### DANIELLE MADDOX

Office Manager | she/her/hers | [danielle@ariseducation.org](mailto:danielle@ariseducation.org)

Danielle was born and raised in South Providence, RI. It was her drive to support organizations whose focus is in education and her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her two daughters, friends, relaxing by the beach, baking, decorating, reading and (plant parent) to more than 25 plant babies.

Danielle Maddox joined the ARISE team in January 2021. She has 6 years of administrative experience in office management, human resources, payroll and accounting in an education/non-profit setting. She is responsible for the development and implementation of the organization’s policies and procedures; manages and oversees the administration of HR policies and practices within ARISE; she maintains accounts payable, and oversees monthly billing.



### MEALAKTHEY SOK

Artistic Organizer | she/her/hers

Mealakthey Sok is a Cambodian American from Providence, Rhode Island. She is currently in her first year at Smith College. As the daughter of two Cambodian refugees, she hopes to empower Khmer people and tell their history and spread their culture. Mealakthey works as a graphic designer at ARISE after being a part of the first cohort of the Youth Leader program since 2017. She loves art and hopes that, through her work, she can both use it as an organizing tool as well as express her ideas in different creative mediums. She also loves music, and can vibe to anything from Jessie Reyez to Red Velvet to Childish Gambino and back!

### LAW-REL BUTLER

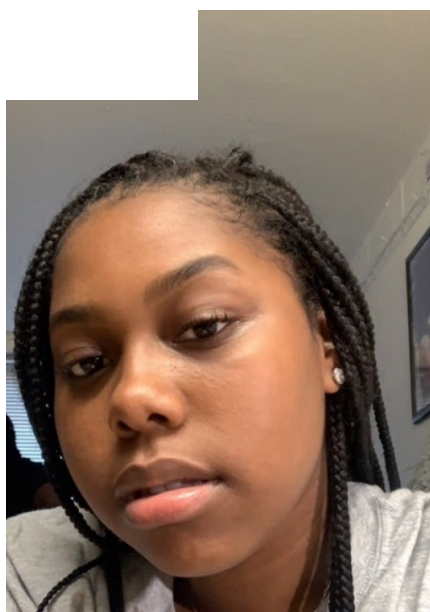
Lead Organizer | he/him/his | [lawrel@ariseducation.org](mailto:lawrel@ariseducation.org)

Law-Rel is from Rhode Island College. He has been involved in leadership throughout his life.

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Rhode Island  
that they need.  
and the



pleasure of serving on multiple panels. A quote that Law-Rel liv moral obligation to step up. Morality was a far greater force the regulations..." by bronze medalist John Carlos. Law-rel credits t being the driving force and practice that we as people need to what we believe is right, regardless of what people in higher at He believes that the work that we do here at ARISE is impleme that will help others realize the importance of People Power.



## NIAMIAH JEFFERSON

**Lead Organizer | she/her/hers | [niamiah@ariseducation.org](mailto:niamiah@ariseducation.org)**

Niamiah Jefferson is a resilient Black Woman from Cranston Rhode Island that is a recent graduate from Ponaganset High School. Currently, she is a freshman at Wheaton College. Niamiah is majoring in sociology and business with a concentration in diversity and inclusion and is on track to be a Taylor and Lane social justice scholar. One quote Niamiah embodies is "Gaining knowledge is the first step to wisdom, and sharing it is the first step to humanity." As an ever evolving individual, Niamiah has a deep desire to learn and constantly work to further educate herself. Since she is a strong believer in liberation through education, she uses what she learns to spread her knowledge to others. In being a part of ARISE for over 3 years, not only has Niamiah been given space to use and amplify her voice but she pays it forward by holding space for other youth to be unapologetically them.



## GER LEE

Lead Organizer | he/him/his | [ger@ariseducation.org](mailto:ger@ariseducation.org)

Ger Lee, a young leader who strives for greatness even in the f  
 Raised in a hmong household, he was faced with many challen  
 him to build character. He attended a private middle school wh  
 younger and recently graduated from Classical High school in :  
 highschool years, Ger learned to develop many leadership and  
 skills allowing him to grow more as an individual. He is now stu  
 University of Rhode Island, majoring in Finance and minoring in  
 Entrepreneurship. Wanting to better his future he plans to creat  
 wealth, and a world full of leaders. Investing most of his time in  
 the business world, and guiding youth towards a better leaders  
 Through his trauma, he has learned many lessons believing the  
 ending journey of learning. We are an ever evolving society, alv  
 be better. The tomorrow we dream of, depends on the changes



## RENINA WYNN

Intern | she/her/hers | [renina@ariseducation.org](mailto:renina@ariseducation.org)

Another alumnus of ARISE, Renina has graduated from our Youth leader  
 program to go into facilitating programs and taking on a part-time role as  
 ARISE's intern.

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## SARATH SUONG

**Co-Chair | he/him/his | sarath@prysm.us**

Sarath Suong is a co-founder and Executive Director of Provide Student Movement (PrYSM), a community based organization w to mobilize queer Southeast Asian (SEA) youth, families, and all grassroots power and organize collectively for social justice. Bc Refugee camp Khao I Dang, his family fled Cambodia during th eventually immigrated to his hometown of Revere, Massachus the violence, pain, and injustices facing Southeast Asians, he b community organizer, centered around the unique intersection gender, and sexuality. Sarath moved to Providence, Rhode Islar attend Brown University. He majored in Ethnic Studies with a s Southeast Asian immigration, resettlement, and resistance. Sar family, friends, young people, and is the biggest X-Men fanatic



## ANNIE RATANASIM, MPA

**Co-Chair | she/her/hers**

Annie is a Laotian-American born in California and has resided in Rhode Island since 1998. She is a first generation college graduate and U.S citizen while her parents were refugees that escaped to the U.S from the war in Laos. Annie is passionate about the environment, humanitarian and social justice efforts. She received her Bachelor degree in Communication Studies with a minor in Business Administration. In 2016 she received her Master in Public Administration with a concentration on Environmental Sustainability degree. Annie currently serves as a Program Manager of the Renewable Energy Fund under the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation where she could use her energy and efforts into aiding in progressing the environmental initiatives within the state. Part of her goals in life is to have a helping hand in making a positive difference in education, the youth, society and the environment. She believes any effort big or small counts. Annie is a foodie at heart, enjoys spending time with family and friends, and traveling the world as much as her vacation time allows!





## DUCHA HANG, PH.D.

**Secretary | she/her/hers**

Ducha Hang is Hmong-American and a native of Providence, RI. Both of her grandfathers were soldiers recruited by the US to fight in World War II. As a result of the war, her family came to the United States as Hmong refugees. Understanding the history of her family's journey to the United States has been the catalyst for her interest in the support and advancement of the Hmong community. Ducha's passion lies with education and education reform. Dr. Hang received her M.Ed. in Education and School Counseling from Providence College. After earning her graduate degree, she pursued a role in first-year experience and higher education that supports the success, transition, and retention of first-year students in college. Ducha has served approximately 13 years as an education administrator, and her roles have encompassed areas such as student experience, academic advising, program development, assessment, student success, student engagement, and leadership. In May of 2015, she earned her Ph.D. in Education from the University of Rhode Island and completed her dissertation. Her dissertation is a phenomenological study of the experiences of Hmong students in college and details how Hmong students manage their experiences in college. She formerly served as the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and the Director of the Center for Student Development at Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island. Currently, Dr. Hang serves as the Associate Vice President for Student Services at Rhode Island College. Ducha loves spending time with her family, trying new restaurants, and creating art.



## ANGELICA MEY

**Treasurer | she/her/hers**

Angelica Mey came to America as a refugee at the age of 1 with her adoptive mother. Growing up, she experienced firsthand the struggles of a single-parent household with a language barrier in an unknown country. She watched her mother persevere through all the challenges that came her way. This strong woman who survived the genocide, had raised Angelica on two core values which she lives by to this day, Education and Respect. With a background in accounting and finance, she has extensive experience in corporate taxation (IRS certified) and financial analysis for multi-million-dollar companies which includes forecasting, budgeting, month-end as well as year-end financial preparation and reporting. She has served as Treasurer, Finance Chair, as well as Asst. Treasurer on other non-profit boards for over 5 years. In the future, she plans to pay forth



## TODD FLAHERTY, ED.D

**Officer | he/him/his**

Todd D. Flaherty is a career educator spanning 45 years as he teacher, coach, principal, district administrator and state education Deputy Commissioner of Education for twelve years. He also served as President and CEO of The College Crusade of Rhode Island, RI's most comprehensive college readiness and success program from 2010-2016. He has a long history of being a passionate advocate of providing equal access and equity for ALL KIDS. As a believer in the power and strength of collective action, Todd and his organizations have received numerous recognition and awards. He also has served as President of the Rhode Island Superintendent's Association, Senior Policy Advisor to the national College and Career Readiness and Success Center, and a Residence to the Council of Chief State School Officers in Washington. He holds a B.A from Syracuse University, an M.S. from Alfred University, and an Ed.D. from Boston University in Policy, Planning and Administration. Todd Flaherty was recognized by the Syracuse University Varsity Club as a Winner of Distinction for his public and community service.



## ROBERT LEE, PHD

**Officer | he/him/his**

Robert Lee teaches Asian American Studies in the American Studies Department at Brown University. Born in Oakland California, Bob grew up in Washington D.C. and Taipei, Taiwan before returning to California for college. He has taught at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Before joining the American Studies faculty full time in 1989, he was director of Brown's Third World Center (now called the Brown Center for Students of Color) and instrumental in establishing the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America. Bob has been a member and chair of the RI Advisory Committee to the US. Commission of Civil Rights and served as board member of the Providence Student Youth Movement between 2007 and 2017.



## JOANNE DEBRAH, M.ED

**Board Member | she/her/hers**

Joanne Debrah is a creative, resourceful and innovative team player, also a mother and an educator who demonstrates through her actions the importance of being a lifelong learner. Shaped by the love of her family and community in Providence, Joanne is committed to honoring the mentors that have shaped her life by doing the same for the youth she has been blessed to mentor on her journey. From her work at Youth Build Providence to her current role at Sesto Middle School, Joanne is committed to breaking the cycle of poverty. With a strong reverence for the assets that exist within her community, she wants youth to know their power and how this can be leveraged to continue to cultivate their skills/gifts. Joanne completed her undergraduate studies in youth development & leadership at Springfield College and went on to Providence College where she earned a masters of counseling. It has been said that “Education is the passport to the future; the tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.” Whether in the classroom or beyond the walls of an institution of learning, Joanne knows we have a responsibility to arm ourselves with new knowledge every day.



## BRANDON PHIVILAY

**Board Member | he/him/his**

I am a Queer Laotian American born into a family of refugees and raised in Providence Rhode Island. I am currently enrolled in Rhode Island College pursuing my bachelor's degree in nursing and intend to go to graduate school. I have been in programs such as Breakthrough Providence, Down-city Design, The Hidden Lotus Program, and was a youth leader for ARISE.



## AMANDA BASSE

### Board Member | she/her/hers

Amanda is a first generation Dominican American, born and raised in Providence. She attended URI and graduated with a BS in Marketing and International Business.

After graduating from URI, she left RI to travel. After spending time in Guam and across the US, she decided to move her family back to RI to have her children close to family.

She currently works as a marketing consultant, helping brands and businesses with paid traffic acquisition. She trains brands and in-house teams with strategies and tactics to consistently scale without the high priced agencies. She also provides training and small business support through the RI Small Business Development Center.

Amanda has a passion for equitable access to high quality education and currently serves on the Barrington DEI subcommittee and the Student Advisory Committee.



## ROBERT W. BRITTO-OLIVEIRA

### Board Member | he/him/his

Bobby is Cape Verdean-American, born, raised, and resides in the Fox Point section of Providence. He is an educator who has a deep commitment to family, community, and good work that enhances racial justice and access to education through leadership. In 2006 he graduated from the University of Rhode Island (URI) with a B.A in History, a B.S in Secondary Education and with minors in Africana Studies and Psychology by way of the Talent Development Program (TD). He later returned to URI and in 2011 he completed his M.S in Human Development and Family Studies with a concentration in College Student Personnel.

Some of his professional experience includes serving as a High School Advisor for the College Crusade of Rhode Island, where he is also an alumnus; the Coordinator of Student Diversity Initiatives for URI's College of Environment and Life Sciences; and an Academic Advisor for the TD Program. He also serves as co-chair for URI's Alumni of Color Network (ACN), as well as the advisor for/alumnus of Brothers On a New Direction (BOND).

Through his current role within the Multicultural Student Services Center where he serves as the assistant director, Bobby recognizes that he stands on the shoulders of those who came before him and is committed to the development of the next generation. It





## JOHN M. MURPHY, SR.

**Emeritus | he/him/his**

John M. Murphy, Sr. is the Founder, President and Chief Executive of Beara Capital, LLC, a specialty finance company and non-bank that focuses on specialized lending products offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Small Business Administration (SBA). He also engages in a variety of other complex commercial real estate lending transactions.

Always connected to public life, Mr. Murphy served on the Providence Council from 1967-1975, and was an active member of the Democratic Committee for many years. Mr. Murphy has served on numerous boards, business councils and charitable organizations, including Chairman of the Major Gifts Committee of the surgical unit at Providence, Board Member and Charter Member of RISE (Rhode Islanders Supporting Education), an organization that provides educational advocacy and school financial support for children from lower-socioeconomic families; and Board Member and Board Chairman of the Reverend Dr. William Craig Scholarship Fund for low-income Providence youth. Mr. Murphy is a former member of the President's Council at Providence College. Mr. Murphy is also a former member of the advisory board for St. Jude's Children's Hospital in Memphis, TN. In 2003, Mr. Murphy supported an effort in Ireland to create a telecommunications network to grant rural hospitals access to St. Jude's research libraries and databases in order to properly diagnose patients. This "telemedicine" initiative brought together politicians from the divided Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland for this noble cause.

MEET THE YOUTH LEADERS

MEET THE JUNIOR FLAMES

