

**THE GLASTONBURY MLK COMMUNITY INITIATIVE
AND INTEGRATED REFUGEE IMMIGRANT SERVICES
INVITE YOU TO ATTEND A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION!**

The Glastonbury Martin Luther King Community Initiative (GMLKCI) and Integrated Refugee Immigrant Services (IRIS) will host a Community Conversation on Sunday, March 10, 2019, at the Glastonbury Riverfront Community Center. There will be a free reception at 2:00 p.m. featuring Middle Eastern food. The Conversation will be from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. This Community Conversation is entitled “Teenage Refugees: Their MLK Pilgrimage.” The presenters will discuss the impact the U.S. Civil-Rights Movement, and the Civil Rights pilgrimage they took during the summer of 2018, had on their lives, their goals, and their aspirations.

The program will be moderated by Chris George, the Executive Director of IRIS, a government and privately funded nonprofit helping refugees and other displaced people establish new lives, regain hope, and contribute to the vitality of Connecticut’s communities. Chris spent twelve years doing humanitarian work in Oman, Lebanon, and the West Bank in Gaza.

The presenters include:

Gladys Mwilelo: Gladys, a 20-year-old Sophomore at Central Connecticut State University majoring in Strategic Communication, would like to work with people from all different backgrounds. Gladys and her sister Lola were born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo but lived in Burendi until arriving in the U.S. in 2013. Upon her arrival in the U.S. States, Gladys spoke no English.

Mariame Kazadi: Mariame, a 17-year-old Junior at Old Lyme High School, arrived in the United States in 2016 from the Republic of the Congo, after spending four years in Kenya. When Mariame arrived in th U.S., she spoke some Kenyan English. Mariame intends to major in International Affairs and attend law school.

Deyana Al-Mashhadani: Deyana, a 20-year-old graduate of Hillhouse High School in New Haven, attends Albertus Magnus College. Deyanna upon graduation intends to attend medical school. Deyana and her family fled Iraq to Turkey, where they remained for three years before arriving in the U.S. four years ago. Upon her arrival here, Deyana spoke no English.

Divine Mahoundi: Divine, a 18-year-old Senior at Hillhouse High School in New Haven, is planing on pursuing a career either in law or medicine. Divine and her family fled the Republic of the Congo in 2016. Upon her arrival in the U.S., Divine spoke no English.

Lola Mwilelo: Lola, Gladys’s nineteen-year-old sister, a freshman at Gateway Community College, was also born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo but lived in Burendi until arriving in the U.S. in 2013. Lola is studying fashion retailing and merchandising and wants to become a fashion designer.

Noor Roomi, a refugee from Iraq, graduated from Hillhouse High School, and is a freshman at Gateway Community College. Noor intends to pursue a career in nursing and would like to work for the UN in the medical field.

Ashley Makar: Ashley is the Community Liaison at IRIS. Ashley was instrumental in the planning and implementation of the Civil Rights field trip in June of 2018, and is currently recruiting community groups to work with refugee families as they resettle in Connecticut, through IRIS's Community Co-sponsorship Program. Ashley studied Literature, Theology, and Social Ethics at Yale Divinity School.

In preparation for the Civil-Rights field trip, IRIS's Youth Leadership Program, which focuses on building cross-cultural friendships and cultivating young leaders, the young women participated in weekly workshops to learn about the African-American civil rights movement, its living legacy of creative resistance, and the vitality of nonviolent social change today. During the trip, they visited important civil rights sites and engaged with local social-justice advocates in Atlanta, Birmingham, and Montgomery, with stops in Richmond and Washington, D.C. The young women are all from refugee families who fled violence and persecution in their home countries and were resettled in New Haven through IRIS. The young women who participated in the trip are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville), Iraq, and Eritrea.

The over 1,000-mile trip, part a road trip, part a slumber party, part a pilgrimage, followed an itinerary of living history. Among the sites visited were Atlanta's oldest African-American mosque, the new National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, and the Kelly Ingram Park, where there were statues dedicated "to the foot soldiers of the Birmingham civil-rights movement," one of which was a sculpture of a police dog lunging at a 17-year-old protestor.

Our goal is for our presenters to provide both a starting point and a resource for what we hope will be an inspiring, lively, informative, and thought-provoking conversation.

The Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization, formed in 2001, to increase knowledge about, and understanding of, the philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We believe that bringing people together to inspire commitment to social justice and to discuss openly and honestly important issues relating to social justice will help build a more inclusive, informed, and tolerant community.

We invite organizations which advocate for social justice issues to have tables where participants will have the opportunity to learn about the mission and work of the various groups and to explore volunteer opportunities.

Please bring nonperishable, unexpired food items to our Community Conversation to be donated to the Glastonbury Food Pantry.

This is a free event open to all. For additional information, please contact Leslie Ohta at 202-538-1161, leslieohta@gmail.com, www.glastonburymlkci.org, or Ashley Makar at 203-562-2095, ext 204, or <http://www.irisct.org>