

# Community conversation on immigration planned for January 25

By STEVE SMITH  
HARTFORD COURANT |



Alan Dornan, an 81-year-old activist from Wethersfield, has been protesting every day for more than 500 days. He will speak at the community conversation on January 25. (Courtesy Photo)

GLASTONBURY — The Glastonbury Martin Luther King Community Initiative will be hosting a community conversation titled **“Immigration: Myths, Laws, Policies, and Reforms”** on January 25. The meeting will be open to the public, and held via the Zoom platform.

The conversation is being held in conjunction with the Integrated Refugee Immigrant Services (IRIS) and the Connecticut Immigrant & Refugee Coalition (CIRC).

GMLKCI Director Leslie Ohta said the topic is an important and current one. “It’s very timely. We expect significant changes to be made under the Biden administration,” Ohta said, “pertaining not just to DACA, but other immigration issues.”

Moderator for the conversation will be Jon Bauer, a clinical professor of law, the Richard D. Tulisano ’69 Scholar in Human Rights, and the director of the Asylum and Human Rights Clinic at UConn School of Law.

Panelists include Chris George, executive director of IRIS; Dana Bucin, an immigration attorney with the Murtha Cullina law firm; Alan Dornan, an 81-year-old activist who has been demonstrating with a sign advocating for DREAMers and all immigrants for 90 minutes each day in his Wethersfield community since January 25, 2018; and Demetrios Giannaros, an immigrant, a former member of the Connecticut House of Representatives, and former professor at the University of Hartford.

Bauer, Ohta said, took part in an earlier GMLKCI Community Conversation on immigration. George, a Glastonbury resident, helped facilitate the sponsorship of a family of Syrian refugees by the Congregational Church of South Glastonbury four years ago. Bucin, Ohta said, had reached out to the group after attending the group’s conversation in December, which was about forgotten history, and was instrumental in making the immigration conversation happen. “She sent me the nicest e-mail, talking about how important the issue is, and that she would love for us to do a conversation on it,” Ohta said. “I agreed, and we’ve been working together to put it together.”

Bucin also introduced Ohta to Dornan, who Ohta said is “quite a character.” “I think he’s going to be a big hit,” Ohta said. “He has been protesting for more than 500 days in Wethersfield, an hour-and-a-half every single day. He committed an act of civil disobedience at the federal court house in Hartford, and he refused to pay the fine. It’s great to see someone at his age who is so passionate about immigration issues in this country, and is so willing to make his voice heard.”

Giannaros will be presenting the economic impact of immigration, which Ohta said is often overlooked and not well-understood. “The birth rate in the United States has been under two children per woman over a lifetime for many years,” she said. “Which means we are not reproducing ourselves. So, immigration is absolutely critical for our country to grow and to fill jobs, particularly as the population becomes elderly and retires.”

This conversation will be the group’s second via Zoom. Ohta said there were some small glitches in the first one in December, but it was received well, according to feedback.

The Community Conversation will take place January 25, at 7 p.m. This is a free event open to all. For additional information, please contact Ohta at 202-538-1161 or at [leslieohta@gmail.com](mailto:leslieohta@gmail.com).

To register, please log onto the Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative website, <http://glastonburymlkci.org>, and click on "Register."