



Society for International Development
Washington Chapter

FY 2021

ANNUAL REPORT

Young Professionals in Development Network (YPN)

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YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK (YPN)

SID-Washington's Young Professionals in Development Network (YPN) is a collaborative space for young professionals (under the age of 32) interested and working in international development and dedicated to strengthening its impact both at home and abroad by building partnerships among peers and facilitating and empowering a peer initiative. YPN's goal is to provide a space for young professionals to network, learn more about the sector, participate in cutting edge debates and discussions on current development issues, and access professional development tools, resources, and skill-building workshops.



Dear Members of the Young Professionals in Development Network (YPN),

We are happy to report that we had another productive year, with programming that was entirely virtual! As we reflect on the past year, the Network produced several great events, **An Examination of Race, Colonialism and Development - What's the Connection?**, **Decolonizing International Development - Where do we go from here?**, **Race, Diversity, & Technology in International Development** and two workshops on **YPN Call to Action Workshop: Setting the Pace of Diversity in International Development**. We are currently working on a new and exciting slate of events for FY 2022, so stay tuned for more information!

We would like to thank outgoing Co-Chair **Jamila White**, who put on many fantastic events during their tenure. We wish them well in their future endeavors! We would also like to welcome new Co-Chair **Joseph Zorokong** who joins us this year.

After 5 years with our team, **Paul Sherman**, our Director of Programs, will be stepping down from his role to pursue graduate studies. Paul is still involved with SID-Washington as a Consultant. Thank you, Paul, for your effort and commitment to the Workgroups and Networks, and their programming!

Stepping into Paul's role, we would like to welcome **Malavika Randive** as our new Program Coordinator. Malavika will be working closely with our Co-Chairs in planning events for the Network.

Thank you for your continued interest and support of the Workgroups. We hope to see you at future SID-Washington events! If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to send an email to events@sidw.org.

Best regards,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine Raphaelson".

Katherine Raphaelson



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malavika Randive".

Malavika Randive



Chizi Igwe

Senior Associate,
Inclusive Growth,
The Greater Washington
Partnership

Chizi Igwe is an international development professional with 4+ years of experience in program management. In her previous role at Dalberg Advisors, she helped governments, NGOs, foundations and social enterprises around the world address their most pressing development questions. Her interest in the development world was inspired by her study abroad experience in Europe and solidified by her experience in the WASH sector in Beijing, China and Seattle, Washington.

Chizi's past experience includes working with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to elevate the status of fecal sludge management within WASH, designing and managing programs in the tourism sector and teaching English in China. She holds a master's degree in International Business from the University of International Business and Economics and a B.A. in Business Administration with a focus in finance and international business from the University of Cincinnati.



Margo Steinhaus

Program Associate,
International Business and
Technical Consultants, Inc

Margo Steinhaus is an international development professional with over six years of experience with research, community engagement and project administration. Margo currently works as a Program Associate at International Business and Technical Consultants, Inc., where she supports monitoring and evaluation projects and proposals. Her projects have specialized in food security, agriculture and nutrition, and youth workforce development in Kenya, Mali and the Caribbean. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from DePaul University in International Studies, Sociology, and German, with a concentration in Middle Eastern Culture and Politics.

After studying abroad in Turkey as Gilman Scholar, Margo worked as an English immersion counselor at Koc University and Robert College in Istanbul in 2015 and 2017 respectively, and in 2016 she was awarded a Fulbright Grant to Turkey. Her interest in Turkey led her to become a Turkish Heritage Organization (THO) Nonresident Fellow in November 2019. THO is a nonprofit think tank dedicated to improving US-Turkey relations and as a Fellow, Margo writes articles surrounding US-Turkish politics as well as hosts and produces the THO podcast. Her research has encompassed Turkish foreign and domestic policy, gentrification in Istanbul, asylum seeker and refugee integration, foreign emergency aid, and Kurdish geopolitics. She also taught English in the rural Isaan region of Thailand from 2016 - 2017.

Margo has also volunteered with several nonprofit organizations that are near and dear to her heart, including Reach the World, the International Rescue Committee, and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. She is passionate about international affairs, education policy, human rights, and sustainable, equal, affordable housing. Margo also enjoys maintaining a healthy lifestyle and has completed two half marathons, a triathlon and intends to complete a full marathon in 2021.

Tuesday, July 30, 2020

10:00 AM - 11:30 AM ET | Online via Zoom

Race, Diversity, & Technology in International Development

Thursday, August 13, 2020

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM ET | Online via Zoom

An Examination of Race, Colonialism and Development - What's the Connection?

Thursday, September 10, 2020

11:00 AM - 12:30 PM ET | Online via Zoom

Decolonizing International Development – Where do we go from here?

Thursday, February 11, 2021

4:00 PM ET | Online via Zoom

YPN Call to Action Workshop: Setting the Pace of Diversity in International Development Part I*

Monday, May 3, 2021

4:00 PM ET | Online via Zoom

YPN Call to Action Workshop: Setting the Pace of Diversity in International Development Part II*

**This event was off-the-record so there is no provided summary or notes*



Race, Diversity, & Technology in International Development

Moderator: **Bobby Jefferson**, VP, Chief Technology Officer, Global Health, DAI

Speakers: **Lyndon F. Bowen Jr.**, Student, North Carolina Central University
Carolyn Florey, Technology for Development Lead, International Rice Research Institute
Darlene Irby, Director of Digital Health and Health Information, Jhpiego
Jeff Street, President, VIA Consulting Group

Event Description: This event, presented by the ICT for Development Workgroup and the Young Professionals in Development Network (YPN), addressed key international development issues facing the community, including the importance of supporting and achieving racial equity and inclusive development in technology. We explored how various policies have affected race and technology both from the perspective of the inequity in leadership positions within technology fields and how the development sector struggles to attract a pipeline of racially diverse talent. The session focused on listening to voices from the participants to explore the questions and topics below:

- Can we create digital technology that promotes racial equity and the public good?
- Is the current thinking on racial equity and diversity in the international development technology community sufficient or is more needed?
- Knowing that the future development professional will be in the tech sector according to Devex, how can we use technology as a driver of racial equity and justice?
- How the development sector can do more to amplify the growing technology movements in lower-income countries spearheaded by young people of color.
- How communities of color can be more represented in technology and international development.
- Bias in artificial intelligence, facial recognition, and predictive analytics. The historical impact of patent registrations on black inventors.

The discussion aimed to propose solutions, actions, and policies that can positively impact race and diversity in technology for international development (ICT4D) field. This session was a conversation for international development professionals to discuss race and diversity in the tech industry.

Key Takeaways

1) Who is at the table?

The panelists discussed inclusion and representation of people of color, especially Black people, in high-level positions in tech and international development. **Darlene Irby** (Jhpiego) shared her experience as an African American woman in technology and in economics. Frequently the only woman of color in the room, she has faced others' biased assumptions about her experience and leadership capabilities. She noted that people are often more comfortable talking about gender in technology, while race can pose a more uncomfortable conversation.

Throughout the event, **Chizi Igwe** (Dalberg Advisors) and **Jami-la White** (Mercy Corps) highlighted statistics demonstrating the lack of internal diversity in development organizations. For example, out of the 10 African-based startups that received the highest amount of venture capital

in Africa this past year, only two were led by Black Africans. Ms. White emphasized that we cannot do the external work of equity and justice if our organizations do not reflect that same mission.

Both Ms. Irby and **Jeff Street** (VIA Consulting Group) shared their experiences of working in Africa and facing bias as Black Americans. When engaging with colleagues and in-country teams, they found that development partners were more inclined to have their white counterparts lead discussions because they were perceived as more powerful. Thus, the racial inequities shaped on US soil have ramifications in development work all over the world.

All speakers touched on including women and people of color on panels and at conferences as a way to increase diversity and amplify voices from marginalized groups. Carolyn Florey (International Rice Research Institute) noted an "increased sensitization" to the issue. Often the first question she asks when approached about an event is if there are other women or people of color on the panel.

White people and men can leverage their privilege by insisting on diverse representation and advocating for their peers. Ms. White also discussed leveraging your network as a step towards equity and justice in this sector instead of taking certain consulting jobs, for example, US-based organizations can recommend firms in Africa that may be underfunded and better suited for the work.

2) Inclusive Technology

The panelists additionally discussed race and diversity when creating and implementing technology. On the topic of creating technology, Ms. Florey emphasized the importance of including and elevating local experts. Instead of coming up with solutions and helicoptering them in, development experts should co-create with local leaders and consider the historical, social, political, and colonial contexts, as well as the needs of a community. Ms. Irby cited governance within a country as a factor in a project or technology's relative success. Development organizations must be cognizant of in-country leadership and implementation protocols, because failing to do the appropriate research may make employing and scaling a project much more difficult. **Lyndon F. Bowen Jr.** (North Carolina Central University) framed the former approach as a white-savior or paternalist mentality, as it is more effective, sustainable, and culturally aware to partner with and empower local decision-makers. Ms. Florey warned against technology that exacerbates existing inequalities. While technology can serve as an equalizer, it may also further marginalize groups that are already at a disadvantage. The shift to virtual events and education, for example, may make access easier for people who would have otherwise faced the barrier of travel; at the same time, inequalities in access to the internet or devices may compound with limited access to other important resources. As Mr. Bowen noted, technology itself is not equally accessible, nor is it a single cure-all. Rather, technology is a tool, and what matters is how it is used.

3) Built-in Biases in Our Systems and Models

Although machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI), and big data may be presented as neutral tools, they can carry the same unconscious racial and gender biases as the people who create them. Mr. Street likened machine learning and AI to raising a child; a machine is neutral when first created, then learns through its environment and the people who nurture it. Bias may come from those who write the code or algorithms, or it may come from the data fed into the AI. Facial recognition software, for example, may not recognize a person of color if it only has white faces in its database. Therefore, biases in technology directly correspond to the level of inclusive data access during the manufacturing stages.

Moderator **Bobby Jefferson** (DAI) posed a question about the Silicon Valley model of investment, and whether young people in development should follow that corporate path. That model of entrepreneurship works for some, as Mr. Street pointed out, but does not always make sense from the perspective of social impact. Shareholder values, focused on profit, do not always align with the development goals of access and inclusion. Mr. Bowen hopes to overcome these system biases by designing new ecosystems, where entrepreneurs have control over their own enterprises, by pairing inclusive technology with social impact theory.

4) Looking Forward

During the closing remarks, the panelists offered optimistic comments and recommendations. Ms. Irby discussed mentoring young people who are interested in the field, especially other women of color, as a way to encourage the growth of the sector. Mr. Bowen and Ms. Florey both emphasized the need to move conversations around race and technology into tangible policy changes. Ultimately, following dialogue, it is crucial to take the necessary action steps to make international development a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable industry, steps which will be spurred by innovators in technology and by young people everywhere.

An Examination of Race, Colonialism, and Development - What's the Connection?

Moderator: **Swathi Massar**, Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion Senior Advisor, Mercy Corps

Speakers: **Adria Armbrister Makouangou, PhD**, CEO & Principal Consultant, Nzoku Consultores
Jelena Hasbrouck, Consultant, Communications
Itzbeth Menjivar, Founder, BridgePeople LLC
Christopher Richardson, General Counsel and Chief Operating Officer, BDV Solutions, LLC

Event Description: The recent killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd have shaken not only communities in the U.S. but also communities around the world. We are witnessing global acts of solidarity for racial justice through mass protests and demonstrations, awareness-raising and organization on social media, and advocacy for systemic change at an unprecedented scale. Equity and justice advocates demanded for decades to dismantle global racially inequitable systems and structures specifically calling out the aid sector's colonial roots and historical perpetuation of white western supremacy. The 2020 Black Lives Matter Movement has been dubbed the largest civil rights movement in modern history, providing the opportunity and responsibility for the development and humanitarian sector to tackle systemic racial injustice both internally and externally within the communities it serves. This series is intended to start a collective dialogue and chart the path for transformational change within our industry.

Part One: An Examination of Race, Colonialism and Development seeks to explore how the concept of race has shaped international relations from the onset of colonialism to its impact on today's development sector and those who work in it, both globally and domestically. Then taking a more personal lens, we will take a deeper look at how our experiences and understanding of race may consciously and subconsciously produce bias that affects how we contextualize and implement our work. This event will seek to unpack the following questions:

- How are colonialism, racial injustice and the modern development/aid sector connected and why is it important to understand this?
- If race has played a role in the global status quo, is aid/development work a solution or band-aid?
- How have policies exacerbated racial stratification across developing and developed nations?
- Why has the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement resonated so loudly across the world, particularly in some of the nations heavily reliant on aid?
- In what ways could our various relationships with race, as Americans, impact how we understand the sector and those who we seek to help?
- What elements of colonialism or racial injustice do you see evident in your work today? How have you seen this improve or worsen over the course of your career?

Key Takeaways

1) Understanding historical contexts of racism and colonialism

Itzbeth Menjivar (BridgePeople LLC) started the event by stating that conversations around systemic racism should focus on how the system was built on a foundation of supremacy, and not on individual experiences within the system. Menjivar discussed how race was invented as a tool of power for white European colonizers and continues to influence how people in today's world interact.

Adria Armbrister (Nzoku Consultores) added to Menjivar's statement by talking about how economic systems are built of colonization and enslavement. Armbrister emphasized that race influenced not only the enslavement of Africans, but also the perpetuation of white supremacy in world politics and governance. She gave an example of how numerous Latin American heads of states are often white and of European descent even though their nations have large Black populations. Speaking from his experience at the US Department of State, **Christopher Richardson** (BDV Solutions), talked about how this history is often buried, and concepts of race and oppression are still used as a tool of power by the same people that write our foreign policy.

Richardson talked about how organizations, particularly the Department of State, have historically tried to keep African Americans from joining by establishing systematic hurdles such as background checks.

2) Decolonizing Aid

Menjívar mentioned that the first step to decolonizing aid is to practice self-reflection. Self-reflection facilitates the understanding that US expansion and modern-day imperialism does not benefit the American people; rather, it simply furthers the goals of the economic elite. Menjívar also emphasized that development professionals need to understand the context behind the stereotypes connected to the communities wherein they work. Richardson noted that individuals in this field often incorrectly think that they cannot perpetuate racism, white supremacy, or sexism due to their involvement in international development. To unlearn this idea, he stated that individuals need to know the history and social issues of their own country before they work abroad. Armbrister emphasized the importance of creating matrices within the 'silo-like' internal structures of international organizations to ensure that there is enough space and resources for a multitude of social issues.

3) Being an ally vs being a 'co-conspirator'

Jelena Hasbrouck (Independent Consultant) brought attention to why the term 'ally' has negative connotations within anti-racist work. Hasbrouck talked about how language implies actions, and the term 'ally' often refers to white people who offer support to communities of color. But offering support isn't enough, stated Hasbrouck, and suggested the use of 'co-conspirator' instead, as it implies that white people can join the fight and use their privilege to lift obstacles for communities of color. She mentioned that while doing this work, white 'co-conspirators' have to unlearn the 'myth of America' and everything that they have learned through the privilege of being a white American. This recognition can ensure that they don't harm folks of color while claiming to fight with them. Richardson also remarked that in some instances the oppressed can also become the oppressor if they continue to use the same tools of power on which the system is based. Richardson mentioned how Americans abroad, regardless of race, can often lead the oppression of locals when they use their American identity as a tool of privilege.



Decolonizing International Development - Where do we go from here?

Moderator: **Rashida Peterson**, Regional Director, Global Fund for Women

Speakers: **Millington Bergeson-Lockwood**, Innovation and Learning Advisor and Historian, USAID
Stephanie Kimou, Director of Programming, Population Works Africa
Jennifer Williams, Executive Director, Faecal Sludge Management Alliance

Event Description: The recent killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd have shaken not only communities in the U.S. but also communities around the world. We are witnessing global acts of solidarity for racial justice through mass protests and demonstrations, awareness-raising and organization on social media, and advocacy for systemic change at an unprecedented scale. Equity and Justice advocates demanded for decades to dismantle global racially inequitable systems and structures specifically calling out the aid sector's colonial roots and historical perpetuation of white western supremacy. The 2020 Black Lives Matter Movement has been dubbed the largest civil rights movement in modern history, providing the opportunity and responsibility for the development and humanitarian sector to tackle systemic racial injustice both internally and externally within the communities it serves. This series is intended to start a collective dialogue and charter the path for transformational change within our industry.

Part Two: Decolonizing International Development builds on topics/trends that emerged from part one. We will look at ways in which organizations and individuals can begin answering tough questions and addressing issues raised in part one. While we cannot solve the world's race issues in 1.5 hours, this session will focus on understanding the building blocks of how we can begin implementing change, both internally and externally to combat elements of race and colonialism in our work. Potential topics we will explore include the role of media and publishing in propagating colonial or race-based thinking in the sector, how hiring and staffing practices may reinforce colonial biases, and how organizations and employees can examine and alter funding and program implementation to ensure the voices of those most impacted by development efforts are better elevated.

Key Takeaways

1) Challenging Racism in International Development

Rashida Petersen (Global Fund for Women) started the event with a central question: who are the actors in the development space, and who are the people who benefit?

Dr. Millington Bergeson-Lockwood (USAID) discussed this matter through the lens of systemic racism. He used a definition of systemic racism developed by the Aspen Institute: a system where public policies and institutional practices work in reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial inequities. He highlighted the presence of systemic racism in international development. To dismantle this, we need to understand the history behind these power structures.

Jennifer Williams (Faecal Sludge Management Alliance) shared her experience working in international agencies that hire from countries in which they are based instead of the regions in which they are working. She highlighted that this practice perpetuates the lack of diversity in the development and consulting sectors.

She argued that to ensure the industry can tackle these questions of race and help more people, development professionals need diversity of thought which requires development agencies to be willing to hire from beyond their own countries.

Stephanie Kimou (Population Works Africa) spoke about how the international development sector does not seem to be ready to have a reckoning with racism. While there are people willing to reduce harm quietly, development professionals are often unwilling to fully tackle racism in the industry. While she acknowledged that there are pockets within the development world that are trying to examine the problematic policies that plague the field, there continues to be resistance. Moreover, Black women and women of color – who can address these issues as they have experienced these harms themselves – are not being allowed the space to talk about their experiences and enact change.

2) Finding Ways to Reduce Harm

Dr. Bergeson-Lockwood discussed how the first step towards reducing harm is to realize that people matter.

Broadly, the industry must realize that organizations are run by people, and that they are not monoliths that cannot be challenged or changed. He spoke to the need for education and how there are people who want to learn how they can work to improve things. According to Dr. Bergeson-Lockwood, American development professionals need to have more conversations on their own racist history and acknowledge that they might not have all the answers. He advocated for partnerships with people abroad to help answer these complex and challenging questions.

Williams talked about the role of philanthropy in changing this narrative. She explained how organizations need to ask the people they are trying to help what they need. She called for dialogue and a change in mindset through which development professionals consider all stakeholders involved instead of thinking that they always know best.

Kimou spoke about identifying and changing damaging narratives as critical to reducing harm. She explained how the white gaze manifests itself in development work and is harmful towards people of color. Moreover, she highlighted that the tools to fight such inequity already exist. She discussed how, in the fight for gender equality, people around the world have developed the tools to change narratives and allow women to take power. However, there has been an unwillingness to use these tools to fight racism, which must change.

3) The Question of Accountability

Dr. Bergeson-Lockwood highlighted how there is a lack of engagement with the world's racist history and how white privilege reduces accountability in the industry. He called on the audience and the industry in general to be courageous, take action, change narratives, and be willing to take risks. He argued that Black lives cannot only matter on paper and that white people need to be willing to cede power to reflect their commitment to uplifting that Black lives do indeed matter.

Williams further discussed how the industry must deal with the fact that the colonial vision and slave trade dehumanized people. She explained in maintaining such a system, it was necessary to dehumanize certain communities so that developed countries could benefit; this system continues to be entrenched in development work and must be reformed. She reiterated that the industry's leaders must look beyond credentials when hiring and consider an individual's experience.

During the Q&A session, Kimou discussed how the developed world owes colonized nations and must pay that debt through reparations. Kimou and Petersen highlighted how the donor-recipient structure perpetuated white power and how reparations can be a very effective way to create change.



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FY 2021 Network Co-Chairs

Chizi Igwe - Senior Associate, Inclusive Growth, The Greater Washington Partnership

Margo Steinhaus - Program Associate, International Business and Technical Consultants, Inc

Photo Credit:

Paul A. Sherman - Director of Programs
Screenshots from various SID-W events
Stock images from Canva

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