

World on Your Plate 2108: Friday Evening Panelists

Dennice Barr, Representing food & land trusts in the city



Dennice Barr has had a career in retail of more than 30 years and was an award-winning Parent Facilitator at Burgard High School from 2012-2014. Dennice is a mom to five sons but has "inherited children" as well. Dennice held a successful mentoring program at Urban Christian Ministries and is President of the Deaconess ministry at First Centennial Church as well as Pastor's Aide. Dennice is President of The Fruit Belt Advisory Council, a founding member of The F.B. Community Land Trust, a Board member and active partner of Coalition of Economic Justice, a founding member of Community First Alliance, an active member of Buffalo Transit Riders United, partner with The Good Food Purchasing Program, former Board member and active partner with Buffalo Parent Teachers Organization, newly certified Community Health Worker, and active member of

PUSH-Buffalo.

In addition Dennice is a grass-roots activist and organizer in The Fruit Belt neighborhood and part of the faith-based leadership in The Poor People's Campaign, a member of The High Road Table, and Crossroads Collective. Dennice is devoted to her faith in GOD and her work in the body of Christ. cookieatburgard@gmail.com

Deidra M. EmEl, WNY Peace Center

Deidra M. EmEl is an herbalist, urban homesteader, health and birth activist in the Buffalo area. As a member and part of the Staff of the WNY Peace Center, Deidra is devoted to issues surrounding women and families, including education and human rights, women's rights and economic justice. Her work with The Massachusetts Avenue Project enabled her to assist women and various ethnic groups to come out of poverty through micro-enterprise. She has a Bachelors of Science in Sociology from State University College at Buffalo and has been a certified Birth Educator, Doula, and Maternal Child Health Specialist. As a Community Health Worker, she is passionate about creating livable, thriving communities. She does this by actively participating in The Congregation of Israel (COI) Cultural Center, whose mission is to create self-sustainable, co-operative communities through its an urban farming and co-housing projects.

Deidra is a wife and mother, hard worker and caring being that believes we should "*Be the change we want to see in the world*"-Ghandi.



Rahwa Ghirmatzion, Executive Director – PUSH-Buffalo



Rahwa Ghirmatzion was born in Asmera, Eritrea in the middle of a civil war. She came to Western New York as a refugee at the age of eight with her family, after living in Sudan. She was educated in Buffalo Public Schools and SUNY at Buffalo.

In 2018, she became executive director of People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH-Buffalo), a community organization that works at the grassroots to create and implement a comprehensive revitalization plan for Buffalo's West Side, with more than \$40 million invested in affordable housing rehabilitation, weatherization and green infrastructure.

In this role, Ghirmatzion oversees the organization's programs and day-to-day operations, which have grown to include housing construction, weatherization, solar installation, job training, and a youth center on Grant Street, as well as outreach and advocacy on public policy issues facing urban communities. PUSH-Buffalo employs 40 people and has renovated more than seventy-five high-quality homes over the past seven years. Ghirmatzion had served as PUSH's director of programs, overseeing the growth of PUSH's social enterprises and community development efforts.

"I'm proud of what PUSH has done to prove that everyday residents can lead the way in building a better Buffalo, with quality affordable housing and pathways to good jobs in emerging sectors like solar installation, weatherization and green construction. But there's so much work ahead to move Buffalo beyond the legacies of racism and economic injustice that are so visible in our communities," Ghirmatzion said.

For more than 15 years, Rahwa worked with community-based organizations in Western New York that promote community development. She was executive director of Ujima Company, Inc., a multi-ethnic professional theatre company whose primary purpose is the preservation, perpetuation and performance of African-American theatre. Ghirmatzion was the recipient of the 2017 Community Commitment Award from VOICE-Buffalo and the 2013 Community Leaders Arts Award from the National Federation for Just Communities.

Lynda Schneekloth, Professor Emeritus Department of Architecture, University at Buffalo, and Sierra Club Niagara Group

Lynda Schneekloth has worked to connect environmental and social activism, design practice, teaching, and scholarship around both professional and citizen engagement in the practice of "placemaking." She has sought to engage with people and institutions in the work of healing the world and the creation of beloved places.

Schneekloth has found many ways to re-imagine and to care for the place she has made her home – Buffalo, the Niagara region, and the Earth itself. She seeks to deepen people's connections to their homespace both culturally and environmentally. Currently, Schneekloth works with many partners on matters of Climate Justice to address the increasing impact of the global climate crisis. She works with others to build a movement toward energy democracy and a just transition by uprooting environmental, social and economic injustice that brought us to this moment. Schneekloth was a founder of the Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper and currently works with the Our Outer Harbor Coalition to protect and guarantee a public ecological park on Buffalo's Lake Erie shore.



Schneekloth is author or editor of six books and numerous articles. Four books focus on local history as a way of revealing stories about the place we live: *Olmsted in Buffalo and Niagara* (2011), *The Power Trail: History of Hydroelectricity at Niagara* (2006), *Reconsidering Concrete Atlantic: Buffalo's Grain Elevators* (2007) and *Changing Places: ReMaking Institutional Building* (1992) about the Buffalo Psychiatric Center.

Agnes Williams, Indigenous Women's Initiatives



Agnes F. Williams, Seneca Wolf Clan, was born and raised on the Cattaraugus territory of the Seneca Nation near Irving, New York. She is a mother of three and grandmother of seven who holds a bachelor's degree in liberal arts and a master's degree in social work from Syracuse University. After earning a second master's at the University of Buffalo's American Studies Program she entered the inaugural class of its PhD Program. Agnes qualified as a candidate in 1991. The title of her dissertation is "The Retraditionalization of Indigenous Women as an Empowerment Strategy." Agnes published "The Transition of American Indian

Women from a Reservation to an Urban Setting and their Changing Roles" in 1978 for the US National Education Institute in Washinton DC; "Ours is a Circle That Never Ends" in *Border Lines* magazine, Toronto Ontario; served on the editorial board of the magazine *Indigenous Woman* , Austin Texas; and published the article "Two Birthing Stories" in *Native Self Sufficiency*, Forestville, California.

Agnes is a community organizer in Buffalo with Indigenous Women's Initiatives, a project with Grand Island Riverside-Salem UCC campaigning for "Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery," "Nuclear Free Cattaraugus Creek," "Water is Life," and promoting sustainable Native communities. She also works with Nekanehsakt in Buffalo to support Native issues. Agnes is a licensed field supervisor of social work volunteers with UB's School of Social Work providing community organizing field placements for advanced social work students. She participates in Rekindling the Sisterhood, recovery fellowships in Western New York, and consults as a lecturer and writer with human services agencies. She is the President of the Indigenous Women's Network, Austin Texas; a past member of the Freedom Survival School, Oakland, California; and past staff person of the International Indian Treaty Council, an NGO based in San Francisco, California. She has traveled to the United Nations Human Right Commission in Geneva Switzerland, the A&H Conventions in Japan, and the World Conference of Indigenous Women in Peru.

Alexander Wright, African Heritage Food Co-Op, representing Urban Farms

Alexander J. Wright JD is the General Manager and Co-Founder of the African Heritage Food Co-Op. The mission of which is to create community ownership, combat food deserts and eliminate price gouging in the poorest areas of the City. He oversees the daily operations and is the visionary driving force behind the project. Mr. Wright has a Bachelors of Science in Business Management and a Law Degree from the University at Buffalo. Before the Co-Op he managed many Non Profit Organizations and operated his own business consulting firm.

Mr. Wright recently received the Movement Builder Award at the Coalition for Economic Justice Annual Banquet.

