

**Claudius Sillah – Sierra Leone** As Claudius prepared to leave his native Sierra Leone for a college education in the U.S., his mother pressed \$25 into his hand, more than enough, she thought, to get her son off to a prosperous start in his new land. Soon after arriving, Claudius realized that the \$25, which had been a grand sum back home, would not begin to handle the costs of living in America, nor would it help him fulfill his dream of a college education. He immediately went to work, washing dishes in Washington, D.C. area restaurants to earn enough money to attend classes at Howard University. After two years, Claudius transferred to the University of central Oklahoma where he continued to support himself by working in local restaurants. An Oklahoma banker was inspired by Claudius’s work ethic and hired him to work in his bank after he graduated with a B.A. in Economics. While working at the bank, he continued to further his education at the University of Central Oklahoma and earned a master’s degree in Business Administration. Claudius later relocated to Massachusetts and joined the FDIC, initially as a bank liquidator, and later became a bank examiner. During his tenure with the FDIC, he decided to return to graduate school and he enrolled at Suffolk University in Boston, Massachusetts where he graduated with a master’s degree in health administration. Claudius also became a Certified Investments and Derivatives Auditor (CIDA) in 2004. Claudius eventually relocated to Iowa when he was hired by MidAmerican Energy Company as a project leader in the Internal Audit Department. He is extremely active in his community and was president of the African-Caribbean Association Iowa. He is the past second vice president of the Greater Des Moines Chapter of the Institute of Internal Auditors. He also represents MidAmerican on the East High School MidAmerican Partnership Committee.

**Deniz Franke – Turkey** Deniz was born in Istanbul, Turkey to a family that always wanted to live in the United States. Her brother had already been residing in the U.S., and in 1980, Deniz and her parents followed suit. She attended the University of Memphis and graduated with degrees in Finance and Marketing. During her college years, Deniz did a lot of philanthropic work with St. Jude Children’s Hospital. In 1987 she started her career as a financial advisor with IDS/Amex Co. That same year, Deniz met her husband to be, Mike, and moved to Iowa. She transferred to the West Des Moines office of American Express and since 2000, she and her husband have owned a franchise branch of American Express Financial Advisors. Beyond her success in the business world, Deniz has also been very involved with the community. She served on the Board of International Association of Financial Planning for 9 years and was president of the Iowa chapter for the years 1997-1998. Deniz has been a board member of the Jr. League of Iowa, which helps children in need with literacy and disability issues.

**Dr. Dau-Shen Ju – Taiwan** Originally from Taiwan, Dau-Shen Ju graduated from the National Cheng-Chi University in Taipei with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. He then attended the University of Iowa and received his Master of Arts in Educational Psychology. In 1997, Dau-Shen received his Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Iowa in the Counseling Psychology Program. Dr. Ju is currently the Assistant Director in the Office of Student Disability Services at the University of Iowa. Through this position, Dr. Ju accommodates the needs of students with disabilities so they can be successful in their studies. He also serves on the Diversity Committee at the University of Iowa, which advises the President on issues affecting the campus and the community. Dau-Shen played a key factor in creating the Asian American Coalition group. Dr. Ju volunteers his time at several campus programs such as “Prepare Our Sons for Life” and the “Safe Zone” program. He has received many awards for his academic and community achievements including the Audrey Qualls Commitment to Diversity Award and the Mary Jo Small Staff Development Scholarship.

**Vinh Nguyen – Vietnam** Vinh was born in Saigon during the height of the Vietnam War. After the war came to an end in 1975, life in South Vietnam changed completely, and his family decided to smuggle Vinh out on a tiny boat in search of a better future. After many days out in open sea without food and water, Vinh was rescued by an oil tanker and sent to a refugee camp in Thailand. He was later accepted by the U.S. and resettled in Des Moines, Iowa. Vinh spoke no English and faced many difficulties as he adjusted to his new life. He enrolled at DMACC to learn English while working many different off jobs to survive. In 1987 he was hired by the Des Moines Public Schools as a Native Language Tutor to assist Southeast Asian refugee students. He fell in love with his job and pursued his dream to become a teacher. He graduated from Drake in 1993 with a teaching license in mathematics and began teaching math at a local high school. He later worked as a community liaison and advisor for the English as a Second Language Program. Vinh now holds a master's degree in Leadership in Education from the University of Northern Iowa and is the ESL program specialist. Vinh is very active in the community and has lent his skills and support in many projects and activities in the Southeast Asian community. He served on the board of many organizations. He is a strong advocate for the needs of the refugee and immigrant population.

**Surasee (See) Rodari – Thailand** See arrived in Iowa from Thailand over fifty years ago to live with an uncle in Victor. He graduated from high school in Iowa and went on to earn a college degree and become a U.S. citizen. See has had a successful, decades-long career at Bankers trust, where he has served as Vice President, Consumer Services Manager at the East Office in Des Moines. He has helped his employer seek out and recruit Asian-Americans while celebrating and embracing their culture. He conducted lunch and learn sessions on Asian culture and has been a vital participant in other cultural events as an active member of the Asian-American community. Among his many civic accomplishments, See has served as president of the Thai Committee and the Asian American Cultural Committee and was the winner of the prestigious Governor's Volunteer Award in 2001 for his work in the Asian and Pacific Islander American Advocacy Group for the Iowa Department of Human Rights. He was a board member of the 2000-01 Greater Des Moines Leadership Advisory Board for the Iowa Bankers Association, the Highland Park Business Club, the National Conference for Community and Justice and the Iowa Radio Reading Information System. He has also been a member of Neighborhood Housing Services in Des Moines and has served as a Human Rights Commissioner for the City of Des Moines.