

Shaimaa Aly – Egypt - Shaimaa came to the US in 2001 as an immigrant from Egypt. Her nominator, Sanjita Pradhan said, “Shaimaa is one of the biggest champions, ally, and advocate of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in our community.” Shaimaa has been described as a volunteer extraordinaire that serves extensively to help others, whether she is volunteering at Meals for the Heartland, CultureALL, or Genesis Youth Foundation or serving as a commissioner at the West Des Moines Human Rights Commission and as the Social Capital Chair for Capital Crossroads. Shaimaa also hosts the ‘Randomly Selected for Random Search’ podcast.

Harka Biswa - Bhutan- Harka is originally from Bhutan and arrived in Iowa in 2011 from a refugee camp in Nepal. Harka founded the Bhutanese Community in Iowa. His work as a partner and advocate for the Bhutanese community has been invaluable to the community. You can see this in his work to help during the pandemic with whatever is needed: delivering PPE, helping complete unemployment applications, or helping raise funds for families in need.

Ivania Gabriella Guerra Ceron – El Salvador- Ivania (Gabby) is originally from El Salvador. As her nominator Kenia Calderon stated, “Gabby is a passionate advocate for the rights and inclusion of immigrant youth and the LGBTQ community of color.” Gabby helped to create the Iowa Queer Communities of Color Coalition, which addresses the inequality of services available to queer people of color. Gabby has done great work in the community with Please Pass the Love and through her other community engagements.

Dr. Maria Corona - Ecuador - Originally from Ecuador, Maria is an amazing community organizer and advocate for social and racial justice. As her nominator, Kenia Calderon said, “All of her research and professional work has centered on the reality of being an immigrant in this state. Her passion and focus lies on advocating for the rights of Latinx, immigrant and refugee survivors of domestic violence.” Maria has recently been named Executive Director of the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Luisita Thompson - Philippines Luisita is originally from the Philippines and came to the United States in 2002 as a mail-order-bride. Luisita has courageously shared her story with others and dedicated her time to her community. Luisita is the founder of the Filipino American Society of Iowa, which is dedicated to connecting Iowans and Filipinos. This organization celebrates Filipino culture and addresses needs within the Filipino community by sharing critical information, including setting up a recent Covid-19 vaccine clinic for the Filipino American Community.