

# NDI Diversity Summit 9.0 2020

## *“Hate Has No Home Here – Beyond the Yard Signs”*

### Keynote Speaker

**Grab T with Nikki Turpin.** Educator + Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Chapel Hill-Chauncy Hall, Nikki joins us to discuss how to support racial justice, diversity and activism beyond yard signs and how the past informs the present. This is a 20 min presentation followed by 20 min. audience Q&A.

***Nikki Turpin*** joined Chapel Hill-Chauncy Hall in Waltham, MA as Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the summer of 2020. As an educator, Nikki has led the People of Color Affinity Group while attending the Inclusivity Board at Nashoba Brooks School. She was also the Programming Director/Board member at The Robbins House in Concord (the house lived in by Concord’s first freed African-Americans), and was an instructor at the Foundation for MetroWest Youth in Philanthropy at Middlesex School. Nikki has led numerous presentations and programs for organizations such as the Association of African American Museums, AFRICANO Waltham, and the Walden Pond Civil Disobedience Program. She is a graduate of Marist College with a BA in English Literature and minors in Psychology and Education.

## Panel and Moderator Bios

**The Kapoor Family** - Amit Kapoor and Ruchi Kapoor are former Needham residents of Indian heritage who have recently moved out of state. They will share their experience of living in Needham as a minority family.

**Mani G. Iyer** – Poet, Disabilities Advocate, Mani Iyer was born and raised in India. He is deafblind due to Usher Syndrome, a rare, genetic disorder,. He has a graduate degree in computer science and MFA in Poetry. His poems have appeared in several journals and anthologies and his collection of poems, *I am the Dancing*, was published in 2019. He has lived in Needham for 24 years and is on the town’s Commission on Disabilities. Mani will discuss his experience living with a disability in Needham.

**Sinceree Diego**: President, METCO Needham Parent Council + CEO, BreakFit Wellness LLC, a health facility empowering women to be healthier and stronger. Sinceree’s passion for fitness is matched by her commitment to see a strong Needham/Boston community. In her 4<sup>th</sup> year as President, METCO Needham Parent Council, she is committed to using leadership and example to raise the voices and awareness of the METCO Needham community, which at times is underrepresented.

**Leah Sims**. Leah Sims is an IT Analyst working in healthcare. She has lived in Needham for 17 years and is originally from California. She and her husband have raised their interracial daughters in the Needham public schools and will speak on that experience.

*Moderated by*

**Mark Braun**. Program Director for Organizational Development and Learning at Boston University, Mark is also part of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team. He facilitates leadership and management development sessions, retreats, and strategic planning discussions. He provides executive coaching services and has coached deans, chiefs, and medical directors. He started the *Susan Vogt Leadership Fellows Program*, which is part of the Boston Consortium for Higher Education. He served on the Board of Trustees of Temple Beth Shalom and was a Boy Scout Leader for Troop 13 in Needham. He has been involved with the Needham Diversity Initiative for 9 years.

## Breakout Sessions Description and Presenter Bios

### **A1. Beyond Yard Signs: Steps Towards Taking Action in the Community.**

The status quo in your community has to change, so you attend the march, put out signs, call your representatives, read the books – but what’s next? In this session, I’ll talk about what my (unanticipated) dive into community organizing has taught me, and what sustainable anti-racist and justice work might look like for each of us. For real change on a large scale, that is just what it will take.

**Presented by Noah Mertz. Educator, Founding Member, Equal Justice in Needham.** In his years teaching in unorthodox settings after college, Noah’s feelings about his hometown became increasingly conflicted, as he reconciles the positives of safety, space, and well-resourced schools with the financial inaccessibility, homogeneity, academic pressure, de facto regional segregation, and larger myth of MA exceptionalism. Back in Needham due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he witnessed, in the George Floyd uprisings, the reawakening of a collective political consciousness. This motivated him to link up with local organizers who saw the need for more awareness of racism and systemic injustice in Needham, as well as organized political activism from residents to campaign for real change. Through planning vigils, listening to stories of and organizing with BIPOC in town, and brainstorming solutions, Equal Justice in Needham was born.



**A2. Equity in Education- Think Local.** 2020 has been tough on parents. From the pandemic to racial tensions to political instability, this year has brought American inequity to the forefront. As our children ask hard questions, many parents wonder what to say, what are their roles and how to make a difference as parents and humans. Join Liz for a look at parenting and education through the lens of equity. We’ll dip into these ideas broadly, take a local focus, talk about actions beyond yard signs and end with time for Q&A.

**Presented by Liz Dempsey Lee.** Liz is a lifelong educator and kid at heart with experience teaching grades PK-8, plus undergrad and graduate students. Her research focuses on family-school relationships across boundaries incl. parenting style and socioeconomic status. She also consults, writes, and presents on equitable parenting, relationships in education, early childhood education, family engagement policies/practices, and elementary STEM ed. Follow her blog at [www.lizdempseylee.com](http://www.lizdempseylee.com)

**A3. 'Birth of a Hoodie' – Dissecting the Media's Role in Influencing Identity Bias.**

How did a simple, popular apparel item become symbolic of an ominous young black male? Why are addicts in white communities portrayed as people in need of empathy/crisis intervention but depicted as criminals in communities of color? This session explores how narratives about distinct populations are shaped by the conscious and unconscious bias of media, the pull of election cycle politics, the needs of a 24-hour news cycle, and the impact of global events.

**Presented by Gretchen Cook-Anderson. Director of Diversity Recruiting & Advising at IES Abroad, Founding Board Member of Needham Diversity Initiative.** Gretchen Cook-Anderson is an award-winning global marketing executive for IES Abroad, a provider of academic study and internship programs abroad for U.S. college students. Gretchen is also a public speaker and provides intercultural communications, multicultural marketing & PR, and diversity consulting to organizations in and near urban centers.

**A4. Disabilities Advocacy.** Teen disabilities advocate Lillian Ellmore will discuss her mission to reframe the able-bodied way of thinking and advocating for those with disabilities.

**Presented by Lillian Ellmore.** Lillian is an 18 yr. old disabilities advocate with spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy who loves cooking, art and hanging out with friends! Keep up with her on Instagram @yours.very.truly.Lillian or Facebook @Lillian J. Ellmore.

**A5. "Our Education - How Public Schools Can Teach to the Student Experience."**

NHS students Jesse Young-Paulson and Ray Winig will dialogue about student and staff identity within schools, and discuss steps to work towards a curriculum that provides an accurate history of identity in order to equip students with the skills to navigate real-life scenarios.

**Presented by Jesse Young-Paulson.** Jesse is a 9<sup>th</sup> grader at Needham High School and has been involved with NDI for several years, and is passionate about bringing the adolescent voice to discussions regarding inclusivity in the Needham community.

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**Ray Winig.** Ray (they/them) is a freshman at Needham High School. This is Ray's second year working and educating with NDI.

**B1. The Lived Experiences Project (LEP) - Storytelling for Systemic Change.**

This session will discuss the what, why, and how of the Lived Experiences Project (LEP). Session facilitators will share findings from LEP's first collection of 93 stories of racism or identity-based discrimination in Needham, MA and will lead participants in conversation about how to make Needham a more equitable town.

**Presented by Anna G. Giraldo-Kerr.** A 20-yr Needham resident, Anna is the founder and CEO of Shades of Success, INC., a learning and development organization that partners with professionals and organizations who want to become inclusive and equitable leaders. Anna is a co-founder of the Lived Experiences Project with Dr. Nichole Argo.

*and*

**Dr. Nichole Argo, Social Psychologist.** Dr. Argo's research—in Africa, Europe, The Middle East, and the U.S.—has focused on intergroup perceptions, conflict and conflict resolution. She is currently Director of Research and Field Advancement at Over Zero., a nonprofit that works with communities to build resilience to identity-based division and violence. Dr. Argo lives in Needham with her family and is the co-founder of the Lived Experiences Project.

**B2. Race Amity: The Key to the Future.** What is Race Amity and why is it important? While the tradition of racial oppression was unfolding, a parallel tradition, largely hidden and poorly understood, was demonstrating some of the most positive qualities from American history. This “other tradition” of collaboration, amity, and love has served as the moral and spiritual counterweight to the dominant tradition of racism that occupies so much of our national history.

**Presented by Ramin Abrishamian.** Ramin is a longtime resident of Needham and founding board member of NDI. He is one of the representatives on the newly created Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative (NUARI).

**B3. Indigenous Peoples Day: Let's Make It Official.** What efforts are underway to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day? Hear about campaigns from all over Massachusetts, and learn how to get involved in Needham's own campaign.

***Presented by Fernanda Pinto.*** Fernanda attends school at Needham High School and is adamant about improving Needham to be inclusive and a welcoming place for all.

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**Julie Reich.** Julie is a Needham resident and community volunteer who is an advocate for social justice and fairness.

**B4. Needham High School's Courageous Conversations on Race (CCOR) – A Panel Discussion.** This interactive workshop with Needham High School students in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of a CCOR course will focus on how sharing courageous conversations can generate change towards equity. Group members will share their experiences in Needham- either personally or with a video- and welcome you to the join in the practice of having courageous conversations. Students facilitators include Alejandro Celado, Andrea Hollup, Lauren Lipscomb, Olivia Lynch, Trixie Ogbebor and Yoni Schor.

***Facilitated by Dr. Beth Pinals,*** Clinical Psychologist with private practices in Brookline and Needham, MA. Beth's 25 years of clinical work spans outpatient, school, residential and inpatient settings. Her commitment to transforming systems and promoting wellness reaches to community activities. As chair of the Youth – Education Subcommittee of Needham's Coalition for Suicide Prevention, she set in motion the creation of Needham High School's student 'Own Your Peace' group and Sculpture Project – a fusion of wellness and public art. Her emotional wellness work extends to other high school/youth organizations and highlights the arenas of identity, diversity and equity, in particular, race equity.

**B5. From Awareness to Action: Brainstorming Next Steps.** Inspired by the Needham change-makers spearheading grassroots social justice initiatives over the past 7 months, we will brainstorm meaningful activism, and leave this session with concrete plans for improving our community.

***Presented by Jenn Scheck-Kahn.*** Needham Town Meeting Member, Co-chair of Needham SEPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Council), Jenn is a writer, literary entrepreneur/Founder of [www.JournaloftheMonth.com](http://www.JournaloftheMonth.com).