



NAJIT 46th Annual Conference Speaker Bios

Mary Aponte

Ms. Mary Aponte is currently a State Certified staff interpreter at the Tenth Judicial Circuit court in Bartow, Florida. She holds a bachelor's degree in Latin American Studies from the University of New Mexico. She began her pursuit of a career in court interpreting in 1996 with a Professional Certificate in Legal Interpretation and Translation from the University of California. She worked as a contract translator for Banco Popular in Puerto Rico for six years, then moved with her husband and family to Tampa in 2002. Ms. Aponte worked for the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit for nine years before switching to the Tenth Circuit. Having studied Spanish for more than 40 years, she has had the pleasure of broadening her language skills in Puerto Rico, Spain and Portugal. She speaks fluent Portuguese and has dabbled in Mandarin Chinese. She is passionate about the profession of court interpreting and strives to accelerate her own language learning and professional life, including teaching and training prospective interpreters.

Saul Arteaga

Saul Arteaga has a bachelor's degree in Spanish and has completed classes toward a master's degree in translation studies at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. He is a judiciary certified interpreter in Wisconsin and Illinois. He is a certified medical interpreter and trainer of the medical and community interpreter program Equal Footing for Limited English Persons. An adjunct faculty member for the Wisconsin Supreme Court Interpreter program, he leads mentorship groups with interpreters preparing to take the written and oral exams to obtain certification in Wisconsin.

Saul Arteaga is a certified medical and judiciary interpreter and instructor for a medical and community interpreter training course. He has been interpreting 911 calls for many years and has encountered situations during these calls where he had to make quick decisions, keeping in mind the different codes of ethics for the settings he observes. By holding two different certifications, he has been able to combine guidelines from both codes of ethics to handle the complex nature of 911 calls.

Dr. Niery Bardakjian

Niery Grace Bardakjian (MA in teaching, MBA, and PhD in music) is a conference and liaison interpreter who coaches English, conference interpreting, test preparation (TOEFL,

GMAT), and music (piano, singing) in Armenia and online. She is the founder of Grace+ful learning which provides interpreting, translation, and technical support for events. In addition to corporate clients, she interprets for Armenian government, UN, and EU officials, as well as for overseas diplomats posted to Armenia. As a conference interpreter, the topics she has extensive experience in include politics, education, economics, and development. She is also a singer, voice over actor, award-winning choral conductor, and mother of four who is currently studying for the court interpreter oral exam.

De Jonna Bates

DeJonna Bates, a Staff Attorney at the Community Justice Project in Harrisburg, is a dedicated advocate for language access rights throughout Pennsylvania. Her work focuses on systemic change within federally funded institutions such as police departments, school districts, and subsidized housing authorities. She has successfully facilitated the development and implementation of language access plans and the provision of essential translation and interpretation services nationwide. Her impactful work in this area has earned her recognition from the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. DeJonna holds a J.D. with Pro Bono Distinction from Widener University Delaware School of Law (2019) and graduated cum laude from Lincoln University of Pennsylvania.

Professor Karen Borgenheimer

Prof. Karen Borgenheimer, Director of FIU T&I Program, is a classically trained certified interpreter and translator who is regarded as a skilled, insightful, and versatile professional. Her Interpreter Training Workshops have been an enormous success throughout the US, Spain, and Florida, where she has trained hundreds of certified interpreters and interpreters-in-training. Karen has been a university professor for 33 years and has spent the last 23 years teaching translation and interpreting courses for the Translation and Interpretation Program at Florida International University (FIU) in Miami, Florida.

Tiffany Bukoffsky

With over two decades of professional experience, Tiffany Bukoffsky brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to her role as an Association Account Lead and as an Education & Nursing Practice Consultant. Tiffany's career spans eleven years in healthcare association experience and twenty years in the education space, reflecting her dedication to both nursing and educational excellence.

Tiffany holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Art Education from Ohio University, has completed three years of graduate-level coursework in education and leadership from Ohio

University and Argosy University, earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from Mount Carmel College of Nursing, and obtained an Executive Master of Health Administration degree from The George Washington University. She is professionally recognized with the designations MHA, BSN, RN.

Her professional affiliations include membership in the American Nurses Association, ANA-Ohio, and the American College of Healthcare Executives. Throughout her career, Tiffany has been honored with several awards, including the Olentangy Education Foundation Commendation Program Award (2005 & 2010), the JoAnne and Steve Grossman Torah Aura Excellence in Teaching Award (2012), the Humanitarian Award by peers at Mount Carmel College of Nursing (2013), the Mid-Ohio Nurses Association Motivator Award (2014), an honorary coin from Wright State University's College of Nursing (2014), and being a finalist for the 2017 March of Dimes Nurse of the Year Award in the Distinguished Nurse category.

Tiffany's professional passion lies in educating and encouraging others to use their voices for good, whether at the bedside or the Statehouse. She believes in the power of expertise to contribute positively to the common good. In her role, she is committed to adding positive value to her client's needs.

Tiffany values collaboration as key to achieving success, emphasizing that when team members leverage their unique expertise toward a common goal, they can effectively meet the needs of both the team and their clients.

Giovanna Carriero-Contreras

Giovanna Carriero-Contreras has been a leader in the language industry for over 30 years. She is a national and international speaker in the industry, a trained translator and interpreter, and trainer. She is co-author of *The Community Interpreter International*. She is chair of the American Association of Interpreters and Translators in Education, which she helped found. She is a member of the SAFE-AI Interpreting Task Force, serves on the ASTM F43 Committee on Language Services, and is chief of the U.S. delegation for ISO T37/SC5. She also serves on ATA's Education and Pedagogy and Standards Committees and the Association of Language Companies' Language Access and Advocacy Committees.

Javier Castillo

Javier is president of Castillo Language Services, Inc. in Greenville, NC. He is an interpreter, translator, consultant and internationally recognized speaker. He is a Federally Certified Court Interpreter, NC AOC certified court interpreter, a Certified Medical Interpreter, (CCHI) and contract interpreter for the U.S. Department of State and routinely interprets for international delegations and high-level speakers across the United States and abroad.

Since 2007, Javier has offered training workshops for court, medical, conference and community interpreters across the United States. He has provided in-house training for interpreters at hospitals, Administrative Offices of the Court, and Departments of Social Services. He recently developed and taught training courses for the staff and contract interpreters of the U.S. Department of State Office of Language Services.

He is a former chair of NAJIT, former President of the Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters and the current head of the U.S. Chapter of IAPTI.

Agustin Servin de la Mora

Agustín Servin de la Mora is the president of DE LA MORA Institute of Interpretation. He was born and raised in Mexico City, Mexico, where he studied psychology at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana. He was a Teaching Member at the Sociedad Nacional de Psicología e Hipnosis Clínica y Experimental in Mexico City. Agustín has been a professional freelance and staff interpreter for the last 35 years. He is one of the Supervisor Raters for the National Center for State Courts and has been a lead rater for the federal and consortium oral exams for court interpreters. He was the lead interpreter for the Ninth Judicial Circuit for over a decade, served as member of the Project Advisory Committee responsible for the creation of the National Standards for Healthcare Interpreter Training Programs for the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care. He was a member of the Florida Court Interpreter Certification Board and a voting member of the Technical Committee of the National Consortium for Interpreter Certification. He is a federally certified court interpreter.

Jamila Del Mistro

Jamila Del Mistro was born and raised in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan. She is fluent in four languages: Azerbaijani, Russian, English, and Turkish. Jamila holds two bachelor's degrees in Legal Studies and International Relations and a master's degree in Comparative Law from the University of San Diego. Jamila moved to the United States in December of 2002 as a foreign educated attorney to pursue her studies at the USD School of Law. Mrs. Del Mistro started her career as a court interpreter in 2008 in US immigration courts. She became a registered court interpreter in 2013 and a certified court interpreter in 2023. Mrs. Del Mistro has taken numerous courses and classes taught by seasoned court interpreters and educators. Currently, Mrs. Del Mistro provides language service to many state courts nationwide in three language combinations and three modes of interpretation. She is married and has two children. Her hobbies include hiking, listening to music, reading, dancing, cooking and baking.

Alex Gualino

With over three decades of expertise, Alex Gualino is a seasoned consultant interpreter specializing in legal and conference settings. Recognized as a sanctioned expert witness in local and federal courts, he has interpreted for televised simulcasts, high-profile individuals, and major events. His commitment to excellence is reflected in his active memberships with esteemed professional organizations such as AIIC, NAJIT, ATA, and CHICATA, where he seeks to contribute to advancing the standards of our profession. Beyond interpreting, he is a co-founder of Chicago's acclaimed Steep Theatre Company. His artistic endeavors extend beyond the stage to on-camera and voice-over productions, balancing his love for words with other creative forms of expression. This unique blend of cultural fluency, professional dedication, and artistic versatility represent the hallmark of a long-standing career, which has been fostering meaningful connections across people, languages, and cultures.

Judy Jenner

Judy Jenner is a Spanish and German business and legal translator and a federally certified Spanish court interpreter and conference interpreter. She has an MBA in marketing from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, a master's degree in conference interpreting from York University in Canada, and runs her boutique translation and interpreting business, Twin Translations, with her twin sister Dagmar. She was born in Austria and grew up in Mexico City. She is a former in-house translation department manager. She serves as one of the American Translators Association spokespersons and teaches interpretation at the University of California-San Diego and at New York University. She is the co-author of *The Entrepreneurial Linguist: The Business-School Approach to Freelance Translation*. Judy is a frequent speaker at T&I conferences around the world. She flies a lot for her interpreting work and one of her special talents is trying to memorize airport codes.

Jessie Liu

Jessie Liu is a freelance court-certified Mandarin interpreter in California with expertise in both legal and conference interpreting. After a year of courtroom interpreting, she pursued a Master's in Conference Interpreting at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS), graduating in 2021. Jessie now serves clients in legal and conference settings, blending her dual expertise to deliver exceptional interpreting services.

In addition to her interpreting work, Jessie teaches the English and Chinese Court Interpreting Program at UCLA Extension and regularly conducts workshops on court interpreting. She is an active advocate for the translation and interpreting profession, volunteering with the American Translators Association (ATA) on its Strategy and Membership Committees and serving on the Chinese Language Division leadership

council. Jessie also hosts the Chinese Language Division podcast, where she engages experts to discuss key issues in the profession.

Luis Lopez Resendiz

Luis López Resendiz is currently CIELO's program director; he is a Ñuú Savi. He is committed to taking the fight for the respect of the rights of Indigenous peoples to spaces where indigenous peoples are not represented and to make visible their migration to the United States. Mr. Lopez Resendiz is a graduate of the University of California Berkeley with a B.A. in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies. He is a poet whose work has been presented at the Center for Race and Gender at UC Berkeley. Mr. Resendiz has been featured in *La Jornada*, *la Trinchera*, *KPFK*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and *El Excelsior*. Currently, he is a host on *Tu'un Dali Podcast*, a podcast for and by Indigenous people.

Athena Matilsky

Athena Matilsky holds a BA in Spanish interpreting and translation from Rutgers University and a Master's in Conference Interpreting from Glendon College. She is a Federally Certified Court Interpreter (Spn<>Eng), a Certified Healthcare Interpreter (Spn<>Eng) and an Approved Court Interpreter (Frn<>Eng). She was editor-in-chief of NAJITS's academic publication *Proteus* in 2015 and remains a regular contributor to their blog. Ms. Matilsky served as a staff interpreter for the NJ judiciary from 2013-2016. Currently, she is field coordinator for healthcare interpreting. She owns her own company, Athena Sky Interpreting, where she coaches students on interpreting technique. When she is not teaching and interpreting, you may find her practicing acroyoga and meditation.

Janis Palma

Janis Palma is a professional English-Spanish interpreter and translator with over 43 years of experience working as both staff and independent contractor in state and federal courts, as well as for private clients in conferences on a broad spectrum of topics. She is certified by NAJIT, the U.S. Courts, and is a Texas Master licensed interpreter. She holds a Ph.D. in Language Studies, a Master's in Legal Studies (MLS), and an M.A. in Caribbean History and Literature. Janis Palma has been a volunteer with NAJIT since 1986 and was awarded a Life Membership in 2006. She has taught, written, presented at conferences, and published extensively on subjects related to interpreting, language access, and language rights. Her research interests are mainly focused on the intersection between language, law, and interpreting in legal contexts. She is currently working towards a second PhD in Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design, where she plans to develop a new line of research into the rhetorics of justice and language access in the United States.

Johanna Parker

Johanna Parker holds an MA in translation and interpreting (Spanish <> English) from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS) and is a federally certified court interpreter and certified healthcare interpreter. She is a freelance conference interpreter and contract conference and seminar interpreter for the U.S. Department of State. She trains interpreters around the country, is lead interpreter for education and training at Stanford Health Care, and is on the faculty at MIIS, where she has taught conference, community, and medical interpreting. Johanna is the vice chair of the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters and is passionate about raising the standards of interpreting practice, promoting language access, and enhancing certification processes to benefit interpreters working in all languages.

Maira Pujols

A Chicago-based interpreting and translation consultant originally from the Dominican Republic, Maira Pujols brings over two decades of experience working in judicial, corporate and conference interpretation and translation, as well as in interpreter training and Federal Certification exam rating. Her clients include government agencies, corporations and nonprofits, as well as civic and humanitarian organizations, museums and market research companies. A leader in the field, Maira was the founding president of MATI, the Midwest chapter of the American Translators Association. She is a Federally Certified Court Interpreter and a member of AIIC, TAALS, and NAJIT. Maira has expanded her practice to include language access consulting, empowering organizations to foster meaningful engagement with diverse audiences.

Bill Rivers, Ph.D.

Dr. Bill Rivers Chairs the Stakeholders Advocating for Fair and Ethical use of AI in Interpreting Task Force (SAFE-AI TF). He is Principal, WP Rivers & Associates, leading language access and language advocacy projects for a diverse clientele. He has more than 35 years of experience in language advocacy and capacity, serving as an interpreter and translator (Russian<>English), an academic researcher, an intelligence community leader, CTO of a defense contractor, and as a lobbyist and consultant since 2012. He has a distinguished research career, with publications in second and third language acquisition, proficiency assessment, program evaluation, and language policy development and advocacy. He is the Treasurer and founding President of 7000 Languages, Founding and Past Chair of ASTM Committee F43 on Language Services and Products, and Chair of ISO Technical Committee 232 on Education and Learning, among many volunteer activities. Dr. Rivers earned the Ph.D. in Russian from Bryn Mawr College.

Judge Jose Salinas

Jose Salinas received his undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Texas-Pan American (now U.T.-Rio Grande Valley) and his law degree from McKinney School of Law -Indianapolis in 1997. Judge Salinas has spent most of his life working in the criminal justice system. He has experience as a police officer, probation officer, child advocate, and attorney.

Judge Salinas is active in the Hispanic community and had maintained a private practice for 9 years prior to taking the bench in January of 2007. The majority of his clients in his private practice were Spanish speaking. Prior to taking the bench, he worked as a public defender for the Plainfield Town Court for 7 years, was on the Federal Public Defender Panel and was a conflict attorney for the Marion County Defender Agency (major felony division) for 6 years. Judge Salinas presides over Marion County Superior Court 23, Criminal Division (Level “6” felony court), as well as, overseeing the Marion County Drug Treatment Court and Marion County Re-entry Courts. He has been a judge for 18 years.

Lili Selden, Ph.D.

Lili Selden (BA in music, MA and PhD in Japanese literature) is a translator, interpreter, academic editor, and intercultural communications coach. Having previously taught Japanese literature and language, she is now a registered court interpreter in multiple jurisdictions and teaches Japanese language, business etiquette, and T&I courses. Since joining NAJIT in 2017, she has volunteered on the Training & Education, Advocacy, and Positions Papers Committees. She is currently a NAJIT board member and co-chair of the Training & Education committee.

M. Victoria Sormani

María Victoria Sormani holds a Bachelors in Translation from Universidad del Museo Social Argentino. From 2013 to 2014, she studied abroad in Paris for two semesters focusing on linguistics, English and French. After graduation, she moved to the United States where she completed a Medical Interpretation certificate in the Southern California School of Interpretation and got certified as a CCHI Health Care Interpreter™. She holds a Certificate on Advanced Simultaneous Interpretation for Conferences from Lucille Barnes Escuela de Intérpretes from Argentina, graduating from their 3-year program with honors for academic excellence. Since 2018, Mavi has worked at Stanford Health Care where she has created standardized processes for Remote Simultaneous Interpretation.

Paul Uyehara

Paul M. Uyehara retired in 2021 as a senior attorney in the Federal Coordination and Compliance Section of the U.S. Justice Department, Civil Rights Division in Washington, D.C. After joining DOJ in 2008 following some 30 years of public interest work in Philadelphia, his primary focus was the section's courts language access initiative, which utilized Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to reduce language barriers. Paul also chaired the Limited English Proficiency Committee of the Title VI Interagency Working Group during his tenure. Previously, he worked for Community Legal Services and other legal services programs in Philadelphia, handling bankruptcy, foreclosure, family law, and landlord tenant cases for low-income clients. For eight years, Paul focused on language rights advocacy and representing limited English proficient clients in consumer matters for CLS. He was a founding member of the National Language Access Advocates Network and has extensive experience with language access issues in law enforcement, the courts, bankruptcy, and legal services programs. Paul's work was recognized repeatedly by senior DOJ leadership as well as the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, the Legal Intelligencer, the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of PA and the Asian Pacific American Lawyers Association of NJ.

Carol Velandia

Carol Velandia is an advocate, social worker, interpreter, academic, entrepreneur, and the founder and CEO of Equal Access Language Services LLC. She has integrated her passion for social justice, conflict resolution, language and culture into the vision and mission of the company: Preventing language based discrimination.

She is the creator of "Language as an Equalizer Program", a program for healthcare, legal, and other public services professionals. Her program seeks to improve the implementation and delivery of language services, by putting language at the forefront of Cultural Competency and Diversity trainings.

She serves as adjunct faculty for the Graduate Program in Interpretation and Translation at the University of Maryland College Park, and for the Master's Program in Social Work at University of Maryland in Baltimore.

Nestor Wagner

Néstor Wagner, born in Argentina, earned a Bachelor's in Aeronautical Engineering (1986) and a Master's in Aeronautics and Astronautics (1990) from the University of Washington. A certified interpreter since 1989, he founded the Southern California School of Interpretation in 1993, training over 10,000 students by 2020. As a pioneer in interpreter education, Néstor launched the first online training program in 2006 and refined it in 2012,

ensuring a seamless transition to online learning during the pandemic. Based in El Segundo, California, he continues to offer innovative online and hybrid courses, reaching students globally. Passionate about technology, Néstor earned an MIT certificate in "Designing and Building A.I. Products and Services" and integrates A.I. into his teaching. Soon, he will unveil a groundbreaking training product for Superior Court interpreters. Néstor is excited to share how A.I. and technology are transforming interpreter education.

Melissa Wallace

Melissa Wallace (she / her / ella) received her PhD in translation and interpreting studies (TIS) from the Universidad de Alicante, Spain. She is an Associate Professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio where she directs the graduate certificate program in TIS. A certified court interpreter and certified healthcare interpreter, she is currently serving her third term as an appointed member of the Licensed Court Interpreter Advisory Board of the Judicial Branch Certification Commission for the Supreme Court of Texas. She was an active member of the Home for Trainers Webinars Work Group at the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC) from its inception until 2019, a work group that to date has produced nearly 60 high-quality train-the-trainer webinars led by leaders in the field of community interpreting. Wallace currently serves as the president of the board of the Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation (SSTI), the non-profit educational and research foundation of the National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), on which she has served since 2015. In 2016, Wallace carried out research on court interpreting certification models in Finland as the Fulbright-University of Tampere Scholar. In 2024 she joined the International Community Translation Research Group, a team of international and interdisciplinary scholars dedicated to producing and disseminating quality research that informs training, policymaking, and professional practice in community translation.

Gosia Wheeler

Gosia Wheeler is a Polish to English translator specializing in technology and digital accessibility topics. Member of ATA and the International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP), she is a certified Accessible Documents Specialist (ADS). Her passion for educating others about accessible communication in all languages led her to sharing her expertise at the ATA's 64th Annual Conference, as well as authoring articles for The ATA Compass, ATA Chronicle, and MultiLingual Magazine.

Ellen Wingo

Ellen Wingo is a state and federally certified court interpreter with over seventeen years of experience working in both legal and conference settings. Based in Washington, DC, she

served as a contract seminar interpreter for the U.S. Department of State for many years. Ellen is a frequent presenter at national and regional conferences, where she teaches a wide range of topics, including comparative ethics, consecutive notetaking, and textspeak in the courtroom. She holds a master's degree in translation and interpretation from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.

Alexandra Wirth

Alexandra Wirth is the Court Interpreter Program Manager for the State of Wisconsin, where she has presented on Language Access in Courts at various events organized by the Wisconsin Judicial College, the Wisconsin State Public Defender, the Wisconsin Department of Justice, and the Council of Language Access Coordinators. With 20 years of experience as a certified Spanish interpreter at both the state and federal levels, Alexandra has interpreted thousands of hours in criminal and civil court. Alexandra holds a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics and a Bachelor's degree in Mass Communications and Journalism. In her free time, Alexandra enjoys traveling and playing tennis.