

# COMMUNITY FORUM TO LEARN ABOUT

# TRANSGENDER, LGBTQ+ ISSUES

**SPONSORED BY:**  
**SAMARITAS &  
FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**MODERATOR:**  
**COURTNEY ISANHART, MSW**

**WHEN**  
**Thursday, Oct. 17**  
**7:00 PM**

**Where**  
**Faith Lutheran  
Church**

**4515 Dobie Road, Okemos**  
**Phone: 517-349-0620**  
**[faithlutheranokemos.org](http://faithlutheranokemos.org)**

**PANEL  
DISCUSSION  
FEATURING:**

**ANDREW  
LORENZEN-  
STRAIT**

**Director of Children and  
Family Services,  
Lutheran Immigration  
and Refugee Services**

**MELANIE  
JONES**

**Staff Attorney at  
Michigan Immigrant  
Rights Center**

**JAY KAPLAN**

**Staff Attorney for the  
ACLU of Michigan's LGBT  
Project**

**HEIDI  
SCHAETZL**

**Local school teacher**

**PHIWA  
LANGENI**

**Pastor of Salus Center,  
UCC**



# Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

## **Andrew R. Lorenzen-Strait**

*Director of Children and Family Services*

Andrew Lorenzen-Strait joined Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) in June 2019, as the Director for Family and Children Services. Lorenzen-Strait leads a dynamic team that develops and operates programs, practices, and policies that are driven by the guiding principal that unaccompanied children are children first and foremost, and their unique needs and vulnerabilities must be addressed in the context of their best interests. Lorenzen-Strait oversees a national network of both faith-based and non-profit partners that ensure child placements (inclusive of shelter services, foster care and Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) programming) are safe, appropriate, in the least restrictive setting, and are in full compliance with all agreements, policies, and procedures with the U.S. governmental entities. Lorenzen-Strait also manages the LIRS family reunification network, that strives to reunite families as timely as possible with community-based case management and post-release support services that facilitate the healthy and safe integration of children back into their families and communities.

Prior to LIRS, Lorenzen-Strait served as the country's first national migrant Public Advocate within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) under President Obama. As the Public Advocate, he served as an ombudsman for the migrant population encountering the U.S. immigration enforcement system, addressing their concerns and ensuring they had a voice in the development of policies and programs. During his tenure at DHS, Lorenzen-Strait launched a new alternative to detention program for U.S. asylum seekers working with LIRS and other civil society partners. Launched in January 2016, the Family Case Management Program (FCMP) tested whether providing access to holistic community-based services for eligible families released from DHS custody can serve to mitigate flight risk and promote compliance with immigration obligations. FCMP was an outstanding success, providing an over 99 percent compliance rate, and more importantly, allowed families to pursue their asylum relief out of detention and free from the fears of family separation. Although prematurely terminated in 2018, Lorenzen-Strait's leadership in initiating and leading this program demonstrates what government and civil society can accomplish when they work in concert to explore and deploy pioneering practices to aid asylum seekers.

Lorenzen-Strait, a licensed child-advocate attorney, started his Federal Government service in 2003, first as a Presidential Management Fellow for the U.S. Department and Justice and then in 2008, as a Senior Advisor, Public Advocate, and Deputy Assistant Director for DHS, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. At DHS ICE, Lorenzen-Strait led humanitarian programming in the areas of: LGBTIQ+ care, language access, religious services, legal access, mental health care, disability accommodation, segregation oversight, parental rights, and trauma-informed care.

Mr. Lorenzen-Strait holds a Bachelor of Arts in political science from the University of California at Irvine, a Juris Doctorate with an emphasis in child advocacy from Whittier Law School, and a Certificate in National Security Leadership and Decision-Making from the U.S. National Defense University. In 2007, Lorenzen-Strait was named the Maryland Attorney of the Year for Pro Bono Service for his work with Community Legal Services of Prince George's County and he continues to volunteer as a Maryland Court-Appointed Special Advocate for children with medical complexities and those who identify as LGBTIQ+. He is a member of the both the Maryland State Bar Association and the U.S. Supreme Court Bar.

### **Jay Kaplan**

Jay Kaplan has been the staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan's LGBT Project since its founding in 2001. Jay has worked on cases including challenging undercover sting operations targeting gay men, fighting Michigan's constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex couples from marrying, defending the validity of second parent adoptions granted in Michigan, and recently advocating for a transgender high school student to be able to run for prom court. Jay was honored with the 2006 Unsung Hero Award from the Michigan State Bar and the 2010 Virginia Uribe Civil Rights Award from the National Education Association (NEA).

### **The Rev. Phiwa Langeni**

Phiwa [pronounced PEE-wah] Langeni (*they/them* or *he/him*) is a transmasculine person who's passionate about helping people understand that different doesn't have to be dangerous. Phiwa is the solo parent of an adult daughter, the Interim Pastor of a United Church of Christ (UCC) church in Ypsilanti, the Pastor of Salus Center UCC, and the Founder/Director of Salus Center, Lansing's only LGBTQ Resource and Community Center (which will be turning two next month!). *Salus* is the Latin word meaning wholeness and well-being. Being a nerd of words, Phiwa delights in the fact that *salus* is a word not commonly used, which lends itself to the beauty of co-creating the evolving meanings of *salus* within the LGBTQ communities of the Greater Lansing Area. In their free time, Phiwa enjoys writing, reading, and creating all manner of things, including clothing and fashion accessories for their small business.

### **Melanie Jones Bio**

Melanie is a Staff Attorney in Michigan Immigrant Rights Center's Washtenaw County Office. Melanie provides legal representation for clients in Metro Detroit and Washtenaw County. Melanie received her J.D. from the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) and spent a summer in London, England studying international law with the Georgetown University Law Center. At UDC, Melanie worked as a student attorney in the UDC Immigration and Human Rights Legal Clinic and represented detained women and children in Dilley, Texas with the AILA-CARA Family Detention Pro Bono Project. Before joining MIRC, Melanie worked as a judicial law clerk at the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and the 4th Judicial Circuit Court in Jackson, Michigan.

### **Courtney Isanhart, MSW**

Courtney Isanhart will serve as Moderator for this event. Courtney is Departmental Analyst in the Office of Child Welfare Policy and Programs for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.