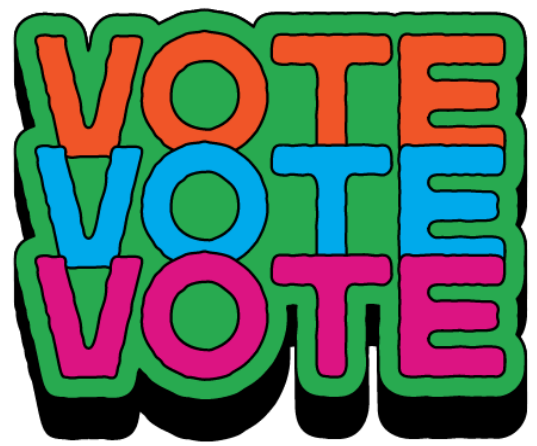




## STEERING COMMITTEE ELECTION BALLOT



# HRE USA 2024

## Steering Committee Candidates

- [Sharon Danjuma](#)
- [Debra DeLaet](#)
- [Beatris “Betty” Ortiz-Drace](#)
- [Brian Shmaefsky](#)
- [Jess Westhoff](#)
- [Kyle Williams](#)



[Cast your ballot](#)

*There are three open seats this election. Vote by August 19, 2024!*  
*Elected Steering Committee members will serve a three-year term beginning in August 2024*

## Sharon Danjuma

University of Arizona

**Bio:** I am currently a graduate student at the University of Arizona's Human Rights Practice program. I also hold a Masters in Public Arts Studies. I work at the intersection of Arts, Human Rights and Education. I am currently

developing a curriculum to teach

human rights through third space education-such as museums and performing arts spaces-and I am developing a digital storytelling project with the Women's Association of Victims' Empowerment (WAVE) in The Gambia, and the survivors of the human rights violations under the Yahya Jammeh dictatorship regime

**Statement:** I am interested in serving on the HRE USA Steering Committee as I am looking to learn from other Educators working towards Social Justice. I believe that being a part of the Steering Committee will give me the opportunity to contribute my experiences as an educator and an immigrant with lived experiences of human rights violations, and the opportunity to grow as a Human Rights Practitioner.



## Debra DeLaet

Drake University

**Bio:** I serve as the David E. Maxwell Distinguished Professor of International Affairs at Drake University. My primary area of teaching and scholarship is in the area of human rights, and I also teach and do research on global health and global gender issues. I'm currently working on the third edition of my book, *The Global Struggle for Human Rights*, which is forthcoming with Cambridge University Press.



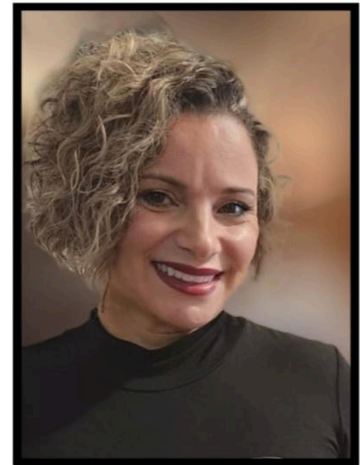
**Statement:** I'm especially interested in human rights in everyday politics and working to advocate for human rights within local contexts and communities. I'm

excited about the opportunity to work with educators at all levels-- from K-12 through higher education-- to help build collaborations to advocate for human rights through human rights education.

## **Beatris “Betty” Ortiz-Drace**

Adjunct Professor, Rutgers University

**Bio:** Beatris “Betty” Ortiz-Drace is a dedicated professional with a strong background in education and public service. She holds licenses as a Clinical Social Worker and a certificate as a School Social Worker in New Jersey, where she is highly regarded for her expertise and compassion. Betty is an adjunct professor at Seton Hall University and Rutgers University and has pursued a Doctor in Social Work (DSW) at Monmouth University in Leadership and Human Rights. Her Capstone Project is on Human Rights in Child Welfare Agencies. The primary objective of her research is to address the disproportionate representation of African American children in foster care and BIPOC families in the child welfare system.



**Statement:** Betty's goal is for all humans from all walks of life to learn about human rights principles and how to advocate for themselves when any principle has been violated. She considers herself a human rights defender and wants to engage others to become human rights defenders, nationally and globally. Her goal is to develop and pilot training to child welfare agencies and BIPOC communities both domestically and globally, with the aim of promoting human rights.

## **Brian Shmaefsky**

Lone Star College - Kingwood, Environmental Sciences

**Bio:** I have a strong background in international human rights and environmental justice volunteer work. And, with over 30 years of professional experience working with non-profit human rights



organizations, I bring a strong commitment to advocating for dignity, diversity, equality, inclusion, and justice. Much of my experience is related to environmental justice and equitable access to natural resources. In addition, my college teaching engages students in civic engagement projects as a fundamental component of the curriculum for environmental science courses I teach. My human rights achievements include environmental justice and access to natural resources projects in the Philippines funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency. I did related work with private funding in Bangladesh, Colombia, and Honduras. I currently carry out community-based science projects domestically with foundation funding and support from civic groups. I also volunteer on human rights projects with professional science organizations such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Ecological Society of America, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and Sigma Xi (The Scientific Research Honor Society). Lone Star College is a Hispanic-Serving public two-year college system that takes part in workforce education, community development, civic engagement, regional economic development, and K-12 outreach. The college serves the northern sections of the Greater Houston Metropolitan Area.

**Statement:** It is a privilege to apply for a position on the HRE USA steering committee. My experience with organizational leadership includes actively serving on committees for professional organizations and NGOs. I have also been on the board of directors for several groups which involved serving as president, chairperson, and councilor at large. I also have the opportunity to work with a unique aspect of human rights in my role as Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair for my multicampus college system.

## Jess Westhoff

Wassmuth Center for Human Rights

**Bio:** With a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies and English from the University of Idaho as well as a Master of Arts in Education from Stanford University, I have more than twenty years of experience teaching students of all ages. As Education Programs Manager for the Wassmuth Center for Human Rights in Boise, Idaho I have the privilege of designing, directing, and



facilitating human rights education programs for learners of all ages. The Wassmuth Center for Human Rights engages learners of all ages in transformative human rights education in Idaho and beyond through programs and resources that build on the ideas inspired by the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Center does this work by taking lessons from history, connecting them to the present, and working to create a future that centers dignity and belonging for all.

**Statement:** I am an educator committed to co-creating inclusive and joyful spaces for people to share their stories, imagine new possibilities together, and join in partnership to build a community where we all belong and thrive. I would be honored to join in partnership with other human rights educators and leaders in the field to build a national movement to center human rights education.

## Kyle Williams

Ohio State University

**Bio:** My name is Kyle Williams, and I am a second-year doctoral student at The Ohio State University, specializing in philosophy and history of education. My primary research interest lies in life histories, particularly those of queer educators. Additionally, I have a strong background in antiracism, ethics, human rights, and educational policy, with several publications and presentations in these areas. I also have worked at Ohio State in various administrative capacities for the past ten years



**Statement:** I am eager to dedicate my time as well as my educational and professional expertise to the HRE USA Steering Committee. I am particularly passionate about finding innovative ways to engage more undergraduate and graduate students (in Ohio and beyond) with our organization, ensuring that the next generation of scholars and activists are actively involved in, and supported by, our community.