

Expert Panel: Reflecting on 2020 and looking to the Future of Victim Advocacy with Dave Thomas, Meg Garvin, Abrianna Morales, and Joél Morales

Dave Thomas, Program Manager, International Association of Chiefs of Police



Dave Thomas is an IACP Program Manager primarily focusing on projects pertaining to the National Law Enforcement Leadership Initiative on Violence Against Women (funded by OVW), Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in Law Enforcement Response to Victims Demonstration Initiative (funded by OVC), Integrity, Action, and Justice: Strengthening Law Enforcement Response to Domestic and Sexual Violence National Demonstration Initiative (funded by OVC), and Law Enforcement and the Communities They Serve: Supporting Collective Healing in the Wake of Harm Demonstration Initiative (funded by OVC) .

Mr. Thomas retired from the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) in December of 2000 on full disability after 15 years of service. He received his bachelors' degree from Towson University, his masters' degree from the University of Maryland, and a Certificate in Advanced Trauma Treatment from the Institute for Advanced Psychotherapy Training and Education. During his law enforcement career Mr. Thomas taught at the Police Training Academy, served on the S.W.A.T. team, was a Hostage Negotiator, and a member of the Domestic Violence Unit. In addition to helping create the Domestic Violence Unit, he was responsible for the department's curriculum development in domestic violence training, as well as the policy development on domestic violence related issues. At the time of his retirement, he was honored to have been the 2nd highest decorated officer in the department's history receiving numerous awards including the silver medal of valor, the bronze medal of valor, policeman of the year, and the Women's Alliance of MD Domestic Violence Advocacy Award to name a few. Upon leaving the police department he served as a Senior Advisor to Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention Victim Services Unit as a Domestic Violence Specialist. In January of 2002 he signed on with the Johns Hopkins University (JHU) Division of Public Safety Leadership where he served as the Program Administrator for Domestic Violence Education as well as teaching courses related to violence against women crimes in the Divisions Police Executive Leadership Program.

In addition to his teaching duties, Mr. Thomas worked with community stakeholders in the spirit of the coordinated community response to deliver training and technical assistance on issues pertaining to

violence against women and violence against women crimes. These services were provided at the local, state, and national levels. Mr. Thomas has taught in the US Virgin Islands, and internationally in the Ukraine and Bulgaria. Mr. Thomas received the 21st Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Community Service Award from JHU in January 2004, was honored at the White House as a 2012 Champion of Change, and appointed by the White House to serve as a Public Delegate to the 2013 United Nations Commission on the Status of Women meetings held in New York City. Just prior to joining the staff of the IACP, Mr. Thomas served as the Senior Advisor, Highly Qualified Expert Law Enforcement, SES, to the U.S. Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office out of the Pentagon. Mr. Thomas continues to challenge himself in his quest to achieve excellence in the field and considers addressing violence against women his calling in life.

Meg Garvin, MA, JD, Mst, Executive Director, National Crime Victim Law Institute (NCVLI)



Meg Garvin, MA, JD, Mst, is the Executive Director of the National Crime Victim Law Institute (NCVLI) and a Clinical Professor of Law at Lewis & Clark Law School. Professor Garvin is recognized as a leading expert on victims' rights and is co-author of *Victims in Criminal Procedure*. She has testified before Congress, state legislatures, and the Judicial Proceedings Panel on Sexual Assault in the Military. She serves on the Defense Advisory Committee on Investigation, Prosecution, and Defense of Sexual Assault in the Armed Forces, on the Victims Advisory Group of the United States Sentencing Commission, and Oregon Chief Justice's Criminal Justice Advisory Committee. Previously she served as co-chair of the American Bar Association's Criminal Justice Section Victims Committee, co-chair of the Oregon Attorney General's Crime Victims' Rights Task Force, as a member of the Legislative & Public Policy Committee of the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force, and on the Victim Services Subcommittee, of the Response Systems to Adult Sexual Assault Crime Panel of the United States Department of Defense. Professor Garvin received the John W. Gillis Leadership Award from National Parents of Murdered Children in August 2015. Prior to joining NCVLI, she practiced law in Minneapolis, Minnesota and clerked for the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. Professor Garvin received her MA from the University of Iowa, her JD from the University of Minnesota, and her Mst in International Human Rights Law from the University of Oxford. *Meg joined NCVLI in 2003.* Pronouns: she/her/hers

Abrianna Morales, Founder, Sexual Assault Youth Support Network (SAYSN)



Abrianna Morales is a survivor, advocate, and activist from Las Cruces, New Mexico. Aside from her advocacy work, Abrianna attends the University of New Mexico (UNM) as an undergraduate and is studying psychology, criminology, and math; she intends to pursue a JD/PhD in Forensic Clinical Psychology and is interested in researching mental illness and criminal behavior, as well as risk management and recidivism reduction for convicted sexual offenders.

Abrianna developed her passion for victim advocacy and activism through her own experiences with victimization. After being sexually assaulted at the age of 15, she was inspired to ensure that other youth were able to face the emotional, social, and legal difficulties of victimization while feeling supported, empowered, and connected. In 2017, she founded Sexual Assault Youth Support Network (SAYSN)--an organization devoted to the support, empowerment, and connection of youth sexual assault survivors and those that support them. Since then, she has had many opportunities to speak publicly about her experiences with trauma and recovery, including at TEDxABQ: Women 2017 and as a member of the Victim Tribute Plenary for NOVA's 45th Annual Conference in 2019. In addition to public speaking, Abrianna has also advocated and testified as an expert witness for legislation to extend the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse in New Mexico (SB55 [2019]; SB97 [2020]).

As an advocate, Abrianna is particularly passionate about survivor-led, survivor-driven advocacy and outreach efforts. To her, survivors are best supported, empowered, and connected by exercising agency in their healing--by learning to advocate for themselves and others.

Joél J. Morales, Director of Operations, The LGBT+ Center Orlando



Joél Junior Morales is the Operations Director for the [LGBT+ Center Orlando](#). Spearheading efforts to affirm and empower the LGBT+ community and its allies through information, education, advocacy, and support. Joél was the HIV Program Coordinator & Counselor at the time of the Pulse shooting on June 12, 2016. Morales served as a Victim Service Navigator and representative of the LGBT+ Community Center during the aftermath. He assisted more than 900 individuals and 255 families alongside 50 other government, community, and business organizations at the Family Assistance Center. The FAC was opened from June 15- 22, 2016, to support the immediate needs of families, friends, and victims directly impacted by the tragedy.

On June 23, 2016, through a partnership between the [City of Orlando](#), the [Orange County government](#), and the United Way, the Orlando United Assistance Center (OUAC) was open. Joél then joined [United Way](#) to establish the [Orlando United Assistance Center \(OUAC\)](#) as their Victim Advocate and respectfully their Community Partnership Developer. Several of his key responsibilities included serving as a community representative and public face, liaison to government officials, coordinating the development and facilitation of collaborative and engaging workshops with vital local community partners. Under Morales leadership, OUAC provided services of support through unique and personalized case management, behavioral health, basic emergency needs, on-site mental health counseling, a 24/7 confidential crisis hotline, referral to legal services, crime victim research, financial training, and employment services, and support to navigate health services. All outreach and support were provided in confidence to protect the survivors, in general, and it is the first to offer overall wrap-around services in the southeast United States. He was awarded “Distinguished Victim Advocate 2016” by Florida State Attorney's office. Governor Rick Scott recognized him with the “Florida Governor’s Medal of Honor.”

Morales was a frontline responder (managing the Family Assistance Center at the Orlando Airport MCO), supporting the needs of the over 250,000 evacuees who re-settled to Central Florida after being forced to migrate after the devastation on the island of Puerto Rico due to Hurricane Maria.

Morales has presented at several national conferences, including the [Out and Equal 2016](#) Workplace Summit, the [National LGBTQ+ Task Force's 2017](#) Creating Change Conference in Philadelphia, Human Rights Campaign's 2018: [Time to Thrive Conference](#), and the 2018 [SYNChronicity National Conference](#) in Virginia. In 2017, he was invited by the [AIDS Healthcare Foundation](#) to serve as a guest during the annual Rose Bowl Parade in California. He was honored with the Leadership Recognition Award by the West Hollywood Mayor for his work supporting the Pulse impacted communities. He was recently named [Most Remarkable](#) of 2020 by Watermark, Inc.

A long-standing community builder through volunteerism, Joél is one of the co-founders for [QLatinx](#), a grassroots racial, social, and gender justice organization dedicated to the advancement and empowerment of Central Florida's LGBTQ+ Latinx community. He also serves on many community boards including, Grant Committee Member for [Contigo Fund](#), stakeholder forum for the [National Mass Violence Victimization Resource Center](#), Taskforce Member for [onePULSE Foundation](#), Leadership Team for [American Cancer Society](#), and former founding Vice President for [Peer Support Space](#).

An advocate for survivors, he was trained and certified with the Florida Crisis Response team in 2019. Joél is also the Regional Chapter Coordinator for [Crime Survivor for Safety & Justice](#). In late 2019 he advocated and organized around House Bill 7125, which was signed into law. The new Florida policy improves the probation system, gets Floridian back to work, and removes barriers to the victim's compensation. Joel has recently joined [The Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center](#) as a consultant under the Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance program.

Joél is a Certified Trauma Professional who studied medical coding terminology and Case Management. He completed the Civilian Police academy through Orange County Sherriff's Office. He is also an Alumni of [Maven Leadership Collective](#) focused on centering queer and trans people of color and allies in professional development. Morales has experience in public health, nonprofit management, project improvement, substance abuse, and relapse prevention. He aims to continue his efforts through social justice and advocacy.