

RHODE ISLAND HUMANITIES

Board Members Biographies

Cherry Arnold

Global Real Estate Advisor, Mott & Chase Sotheby's International Realty

Cherry Arnold is a Real Estate Professional with Mott & Chase Sotheby's International Realty, specializing in waterfront properties along the Farm Coast and the Providence East Side. With over \$165 Million in career sales, Cherry is a perennial top producer and has been named among the top 1.5% of real estate agents nationwide. Cherry is an avid cyclist, golfer, surfer and dedicated yogi. She has served on the board of New Urban Arts in Providence and is an active supporter of many non-profits, including the RI Food Bank, The RI Nature Conservancy, The Sakonnet Preservation Association, and RI Public Radio.

Chrystal Mars Baker, Secretary

Education Manager, Tomaquag Museum

Chrystal Mars Baker, is a Narragansett Tribal citizen whose love and service to family is her primary motivation for all she does. She feels blessed to descend from paternal and maternal lineages of her Tribe whose examples of integrity, hard work and spirituality are core values upon which she conducts her daily life. Chrystal is an educator who enjoys reading, researching, sharing history, and having thought provoking dialogue. As the first postsecondary graduate of her family, she proudly holds a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education/Social Studies from the University of Rhode Island. In her professional capacity, Chrystal is the Education Manager at the Tomaquag Museum, serves on the Board of Directors for the Rhode Island Humanities and The JonnyCake Center of Wakefield. As a member of the Charlestown Historical Society, she carries on the legacy of her grandparents who were among its founders. Her role in these organizations enable her to share cultural knowledge while working to uplift the Native voice.

Stephanie Basile

Founding Agent, Stephanie Basile Group

Stephanie received her BS in Mechanical Engineering from Lehigh University in 1995, her MBA in Finance from the University of Chicago (with study at London School of Economics) in 2001 and continues to be an avid and enthusiastic learner. She held several positions in both Chicago and London for a Fortune Global 500 company, fast tracking her way to senior management, before deciding to follow her passion, move back to Rhode Island and start a career in real estate. 20+ years have passed since that decision and Stephanie has never looked back. Along the way, she has cultivated a loyal following of clients and a deep knowledge of the ins and outs of real estate. Her own experiences with buying on the East Side of Providence, coastal Rhode Island and Nantucket help her to guide and educate her clients. Stephanie has a keen understanding of what they are looking for and thoroughly enjoys helping others with finding that special home or in making smart investment choices. It's the satisfaction of helping others achieve their goals that motivates her every day. She is the recipient of multiple customer service awards, peer review awards and sales awards by volume including the KWAOR Circle of Sales Excellence awards 2010-2023, Rhode Island Monthly's Peer Reviewed Professional Excellence Award winner 2017 – 2023, Real Trends top 1000 agents in the US 2022 (ranking in the top 1.5% of all agents), and the Five Star Professional Award 2015-2023. A Founding Agent at the new Compass Providence office, Stephanie is incredibly proud and excited to have formed The Stephanie Basile Group. Working alongside her team of agents, transaction coordinators and support staff, Stephanie and her Group are dedicated to customer service. The mission statement for the SB Group is to improve the lives of our clients, family, and friends by delivering top notch real-estate expertise and customer service, regardless of price point. Simply put: we want to exceed your expectations. If she's not busy planning her next client party, you'll probably find her on a soccer field somewhere in New England. She loves everything about Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Leaving the Ocean State after high school gave her an even heightened sense of appreciation for all it has to offer and a strong desire to move back. If you're ready to make your move, give her and her team a call at 401-465-3975 and they will make it a fun, creative and exciting process.

Tiffini Bowers, Vice Chair

Assistant Director of Special Collections for Art & Exhibitions, John Hay Library, Brown University

Tiffini Bowers is an award-winning museum curator with over 15 years of experience. She is currently the Assistant Director of Special Collections for Art & Exhibitions at the John Hay Library at Brown University. Tiffini has worked with numerous museums, cultural institutions, and entertainment organizations including the Smithsonian Institution, Hermosa Beach Historical Society, Hollywood Black Film Festival, Autry/Southwest Museum of the American Indian, and the California African American Museum. In addition to museums, arts, and libraries, Ms. Bowers has a love of synchronized swimming, film, and culinary history. She received her Master of Arts in History-Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program.

Robert E. Craven, Esq

Office of General Treasurer James A. Diossa as his Director of Legislative Affairs

Robert Craven is an attorney and an Adjunct Professor at the Community College of Rhode Island. Born and raised in Saunderstown, Robert is a lifelong Rhode Island resident. After graduating with a degree in International Affairs from George Washington University, Robert earned his law degree at Villanova University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. On returning to Rhode Island, he sought out opportunities for civic involvement. Robert finds civic education and engagement, particularly among this state's youth, to be of central importance to a healthy 21st-century democracy. Additionally, Robert was campaign manager for Treasurer James Diossa.

Jaffa Davies, MS

Psychoeducational Specialist, Delta Consultants

Jaffa Kessler Davies grew up and was educated in Providence, graduating from Classical High School and Brown University prior to earning her graduate degree at Syracuse University. She is a psychoeducational specialist and is a founding partner of Delta Consultants, a clinical practice providing therapeutic, evaluation, and consulting services to the greater Rhode Island Community. In her professional life, Jaffa has administered psychoeducational evaluations, mentored first year teachers, served as an educational consultant to numerous charter and independent/parochial schools, provided educational guidance for therapeutic foster care teams, and served as an adult literacy coach. Jaffa has also served on various community boards including Temple Beth El, Dunn Institute, Highlander School, and JCC Preschool.

Antonia Noori Farzan

Journalist

Antonia Noori Farzan is a watchdog reporter at *The Providence Journal*. A Rhode Island native, she previously worked at *The Washington Post* and spent several years at alt-weeklies in Arizona and Florida. Antonia is a graduate of Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and Hamilton College, and was honored with a George K. Polk award for investigative reporting in 2017.

Carolyn Mark

Mediator

Carolyn Mark is a professional mediator and experienced facilitator with a commitment to empowering individuals and groups to meaningfully participate in decision-making on matters that impact them. As a conflict resolution practitioner, Carolyn sees power in perspective-taking and believes that the best decisions are made when those most impacted have a meaningful role in determining the outcome. Carolyn has 30+ years experience working in the non-profit sector. She has been a labor organizer and educator, a program and executive director of several economic development nonprofits, and is a past president of the Rhode Island Chapter of the National Organization for Women. She received a 2011 YWCA RI Woman of Achievement Award for her work to advance the status of women and girls in Rhode Island, as well as the 2023 Sojourner House Community Champion Award. Carolyn has served on the board of the Center for Mediation and Collaboration RI, Rhode Island's only community mediation center. Previously, she served as chair of the board of the Economic Progress Institute which advances policies to improve the economic well-being of Rhode Islanders. She was also a founding board member of the East Greenwich Education Foundation. In addition to her non-profit work, Carolyn served for eight years as an elected member of the East Greenwich School Committee. As chair for six years, she led strategic planning, labor negotiations, mental health and wellness initiatives, and the annual budget process. Carolyn received a Bachelor of Arts in Labor Studies and Industrial Relations from the Pennsylvania State University and a Master of City Planning from the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a focus on community development. Carolyn lives in Providence with her husband Bill Stone, and is the proud parent of two adult children. She enjoys going to the theater, playing early music, skiing, cycling, hiking, reading, and weight-lifting.

Emily McHugh

Director of Strategic Initiatives, SQA

Emily McHugh lives with her partner and two cats in Warwick, Rhode Island. She is the Director of Strategic Initiatives at SQA Group, a Providence-based tech and advisory services firm, where she is responsible for all things cross-functional and operational. Before shifting to tech, Emily spent six years working in nonprofit development at a statewide college access organization, where she was responsible for grant writing and reporting, donor cultivation, and fundraising event planning and execution. She has served as the Development Committee Chair for the Providence Animal Rescue League Board of Directors and the New Leaders Council Board of Directors. Emily earned a BA in political science from Rhode Island College and a MA in legislative affairs from George Washington University. She also holds a graduate certificate in nonprofit leadership from Rhode Island College. Outside of work, you'll find Emily reading with her cats, gardening in her backyard, or fixing something in her 110-year-old house.

Eugene “Gene” B. Mihaly, PhD

Retired

Eugene “Gene” B. Mihaly’s career has encompassed roles in government, academia, business, and thenon-profit sector. He served in the State Department and the Peace Corps as director of East Asian operations. He taught international relations and economics at UC Berkeley and Dartmouth College’s Tuck School of Business. He founded Mihaly International Corp., a consulting and project development firm. He was chair of Plan USA, a child-focused international assistance non-profit, and a director of Plan International. In Rhode Island, he had two terms on the Jamestown Town Council. He is the current chair of the Jamestown Philomenian Library and a director, incoming treasurer, and teacher at the Lifelong Learning Collaborative. Previously, Gene was the founding chair of Rhode Island Public Radio, served as a former board chair of the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities (now known as RI Humanities), former chair of the Appalachian Mountain Club. He consults with non-profits through Empower Success Corps (ESC). Gene is an avid cyclist and kayaker. He holds a BA from Harvard University and a PhD from the London School of Economics. He is the husband of Stacey Mihaly and a delighted parent of four.

Doug Popovich, Board Chair

Storytelling & Creative Content Professional

Doug Popovich is a brand storyteller and creative director with industry-leading expertise in communications that weave together facts and emotions to create vibrant connections. Doug is a pioneer in activating audience-centric content and brand design to all users at all levels, supercharging tools to become proactive strategic content delivery channels for clients in advertising, branding, consulting, entertainment, financial services, healthcare, media, pharmaceutical, private equity, technology, etc. For clients and businesses that include CVS Health, Forbes, Major League Soccer, Pepperidge Farm, and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Doug has served as strategic and creative lead, specializing in effectively translating business objectives into compelling and straightforward narratives to engage audiences: customers, clients, prospects, analysts, stakeholders, and colleagues. Doug is especially skilled in developing high-profile sales, pitch, and event experience presentations and collateral; brand implementation and change management process, templates, and tools; and thought leadership in martech innovation.

Jeannette E. Riley, PhD

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Rhode Island

Jeannette E. Riley is Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Rhode Island and Professor of English and Gender and Women's Studies. Her research interests focus on women's literature, with an emphasis on contemporary women writers and feminist theory, and feminist pedagogy and online/blended teaching and learning. In addition to publications on writers such as Eavan Boland, Toni Morrison, and Terry Tempest Williams, Jeannette has published extensively on American poet Adrienne Rich and is the author of *Understanding Adrienne Rich* from the University of South Carolina's *Understanding Contemporary American Literature* series. Her public humanities work includes teaching literature for the Clemente Course in the Humanities in New Bedford from 2006-2015 and the Providence Clemente Veterans Initiative from 2018-2021. Prior to joining the University of Rhode Island, Jeannette was a Professor of English/Women's and Gender Studies at UMass Dartmouth (2002-2015) and served as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (2012-2017). Jeannette completed her bachelor's at Colby College and went on to earn an MA in English from the University of New Hampshire and a PhD in English in post-1945 American and British Literature and Literary Theory from the University of New Mexico.

Renee Soto, MFA

Associate Professor of Creative Writing, Roger Williams University

Renee Soto, a creative writing professor at Roger William University (RWU), is a poet with a 25-year background in literary publishing. Her poems have appeared in literary journals, including *Cave Wall*, *Cimarron Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Sou'wester*, *The Greensboro Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and *Water~Stone*. She has served in editorial positions with *The Greensboro Review*, *The Southern Poetry Review*, and *Cave Wall*. Her service to her professional community, in addition to attending and presenting at pedagogy and poetry-related conferences, includes terms in the Faculty Senate as Vice-President and representing the RWU Faculty Association on two bargaining teams and as President of the union. Her service to her larger community includes work as a Charter Board Member at Frequency Writers (Providence, RI); and in Bristol, RI, as a founding member of Byfield Art & Design Group, a member of the Arts Programming Team of Arts in Common, Gala Organizer, and Community Strings Project. After these years of wandering around looking for the best fit, she landed on the Steering Committee of the Bristol BookFest (BBF) and has been involved with the BookFest since its first year. Now in its fourth year, the BBF has expanded from an annual weekend celebration to a months-long celebration for all, focused on one book. In the summer of 2024, Renee helped the BBF transition to its first change in leadership when she became co-chair. After the life-changing experience of getting her first dog, she proposed a course at RWU on the subject and now teaches the popular course *Dogs, Dogs, Dogs*. Committed to reaching beyond the academy, Renee has been a founding member of Bristol BookFest. After the 2024 BBF program, (April 5-6), she became Co-Chair of this annual public humanities event. Renee loves Rhode Island—its size, spirit, history, its neighborhoods, and of course, its shoreline. She arrived here 20 years ago, picking up a fine husband and two glorious dogs along the way, and has not looked back. Only forward.

Josh Stenger, PhD

Professor of Film and New Media, Wheaton College

Josh Stenger is professor, chair, and founder of Film and New Media at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts. His current research combines elements of media industry studies, platform studies, fan and audience studies, and digital humanities to examine the 'datafication' of culture and how this phenomenon both affects and effects everything from creative content,

media audiences, (mis)information, online publics, and transformative works. A lifelong believer in higher education generally and the liberal arts specifically, Josh has nevertheless spent much of the last decade pursuing opportunities to reimagine the value of these institutions by focusing less on disciplinary expertise and more on a relationship to learning that will help students to navigate and contribute to the world as it will (soon) be rather than as it (just) was. He has served as co-director of the Wheaton Institute for the Interdisciplinary Humanities and as a founding project co-manager for the InterMedia Arts Group Innovation Network (IMAGINE), a grant-funded initiative to integrate technology and the arts; consulted on curricula, program development, and assessment at various institutions in the region, and has served on several strategic planning groups. Currently, in addition to his faculty role at Wheaton, he also serves as the college's Director of Academic Affairs Data Strategy Development. A southern California transplant to the east coast, he has lived in Rhode Island since 2001 and began to think of himself as a New Englander when family on the west coast pointed out that he had started to say "highway" instead of "freeway."

Eric Sung

Professor, Providence College

Eric Sung is an artist scholar and cultural worker. His creative vision has materialized multiple interdisciplinary ideas into action with a diverse group of stakeholders. Sung's experiential scholarship and companion works have appeared internationally in peer-reviewed and juried conferences and venues, including the Society for Photographic Education (SPE), International Visual Literacy Association (IVLA), and Imagining America (IA). Sung's artworks have been showcased in internationally renowned exhibition venues and public spaces. His art and community empowerment projects were supported by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities (RICH), Providence Department of Art, Culture, and Tourism (ACT), and Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA). Sung is a Full Professor at Providence College and was appointed as the founding director of a cutting-edge program in Business and Innovation in 2018. Currently, he is a member of the WARP Collective Artists Group and was appointed by the City of Providence as an artist scholar to participate in the 'Providence Commemoration Lab' project funded by the Mellon Foundation.

Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie

Author

Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie is the author of the award-winning children's book *Layla's Happiness* (Enchanted Lion Books). She has also authored two books of poetry: *Strut* (Agape Editions) and *Karma's Footsteps* (Flipped Eye) and *Dear Continuum: Letters to A Poet Crafting Liberation*. Mariahadessa is a PhD Candidate in Theatre Arts & Performance Studies at Brown University. She is the mother of three galaxies who look like daughters.

Christopher Joseph Westgate

Professor, Johnson & Wales University

Christopher Joseph Westgate is a media scholar whose research program includes Latine media, popular music, and social identities. His articles have been published in the *International Journal of Communication*; *Popular Music & Society*; *Media, Culture & Society*; and 12 other peer-reviewed books and journals. In addition, Chris has presented at more than 30 international conferences. He is currently a DEI fellow, a Media & Communication professor and a program co-director at Johnson & Wales University in Providence. Prior to this position, Chris taught at SUNY Oneonta and Texas A&M University. He holds a BS from Cornell University, an MA from Columbia University, and a PhD from Texas A&M University. Chris has more than a decade of experience in the radio industry, having served as a vice president, news director, training director, production director, and disc jockey for six nonprofit and commercial stations. He also

sits on the board of the Rhode Island Black Film Festival, the Center for Spiritual Living Southcoastal Massachusetts Teaching Chapter, and the Holmes Institute. On the weekends, Chris enjoys reading, writing, cooking, hiking, kayaking, cycling, swimming, working out, meditating, practicing yoga, traveling, attending music concerts, watching films, and spending time with family & friends.

Robert “Bert” Woolard, MD
Professor and Doctor of Medicine

Advocacy has been an essential part of Robert “Bert” Woolard’s life. He was drafted into the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War and served as a conscientious objector in the medical corps. Returning from military service and finishing college, Bert was accepted into the graduate program in comparative literature at Clark University. He then went on to attend UMass medical school hoping to better serve humanity. Bert has a fascination with history, culture, and social structures, how they shape our lives and how we try to write, mold and create them. At Brown University, Bert founded the Department of Emergency Medicine and developed research programs, residency and fellowship programs as well as the University Emergency Medicine Foundation, a nonprofit academic medical practice plan. In that leadership role, Bert was particularly proud to help create the Rhode Island Injury Prevention Center, which remains well funded through National Institute of Health (NIH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) grants and brings vitally important prevention programs to underserved communities across Rhode Island. At Texas Tech in El Paso, Bert served as a tenured professor, and led an NIH-funded research program that demonstrated that counseling provided in the ER by community-based organizations resulted in reduced binge drinking among Latinx youth. As in his research at Brown, this program reduced alcohol-related injury, including sexual assaults and motor vehicle accidents. Caring for diverse and sometimes victimized patients in the ER as both a provider and advocate — has been rewarding and educational. Now retired from his medical career and back in Rhode Island, Bert is focusing his energy on supporting progressive local organizations. He feels a deep sense of connection with family and friends in Rhode Island and cherishes the remarkable history and ambitions of this small state. Bert supports Rhode Island Humanities’s efforts to increase diversity, inclusion and equity. There are so many opportunities to fund and grow the numerous nonprofit organizations and creative individuals that make up and contribute to the vitality of our state’s communities. Bert is honored to serve on the RI Humanities board of directors.