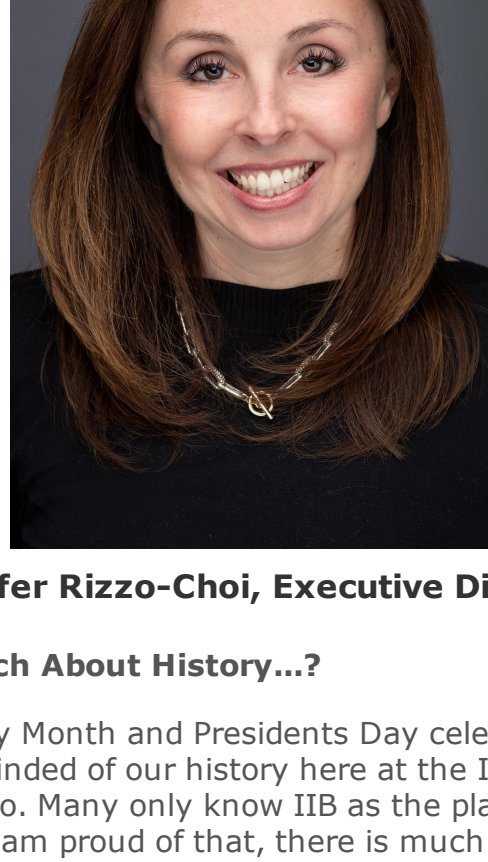


February 2023



Jennifer Rizzo-Choi, Executive Director

Don't Know Much About History...?

With Black History Month and Presidents Day celebrated this month, I am reminded of our history here at the International Institute of Buffalo. Many only know IIB as the place that settles refugees. While I am proud of that, there is much more that makes up our legacy!

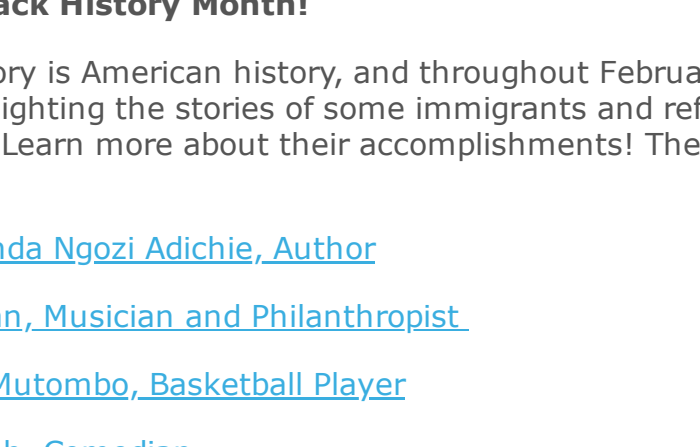
In addition to our New American work, Survivor Support mission, Interpretation & Translation micro-enterprise, and International Exchanges and Education department, we are also a *cultural* institution and have been for decades!

Since 1918, we have been 'the Ellis Island of Western New York.' Thousands not born in the USA have made some part of their journey through IIB. We have over 100 years of being integral to Western New York's refugee and immigrant story. Some took classes here or attended celebrations. Trust me; we have a lot of history! So, from now on, will highlight our cultural heritage and history as a regular feature in this newsletter [and our blog](#).

If you have memorabilia or artifacts related to IIB from your family's journey and you want to show us, we'd love to see them and learn more about them! [Contact us and let us know!](#)



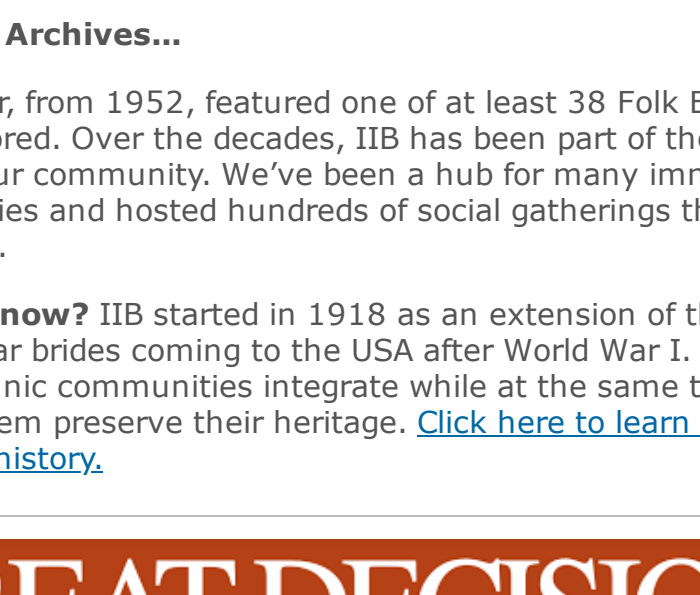
Make a donation to support the International Institute of Buffalo!



Happy Black History Month!

Black history is American history, and throughout February, we've been highlighting the stories of some immigrants and refugees who are Black. Learn more about their accomplishments! The list includes:

- [Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Author](#)
- [Wyclef Jean, Musician and Philanthropist](#)
- [Dikembe Mutombo, Basketball Player](#)
- [Trevor Noah, Comedian](#)
- [Representative Ilhan Omar \(D-MN\), Politician](#)



From the Archives...

This poster, from 1952, featured one of at least 38 Folk Balls that IIB sponsored. Over the decades, IIB has been part of the cultural fabric of our community. We've been a hub for many immigrant communities and hosted hundreds of social gatherings throughout the region.

Did you know? IIB started in 1918 as an extension of the YWCA to support war brides coming to the USA after World War I. We also helped ethnic communities integrate while at the same time helping them preserve their heritage. [Click here to learn more about IIB history.](#)

GREAT DECISIONS

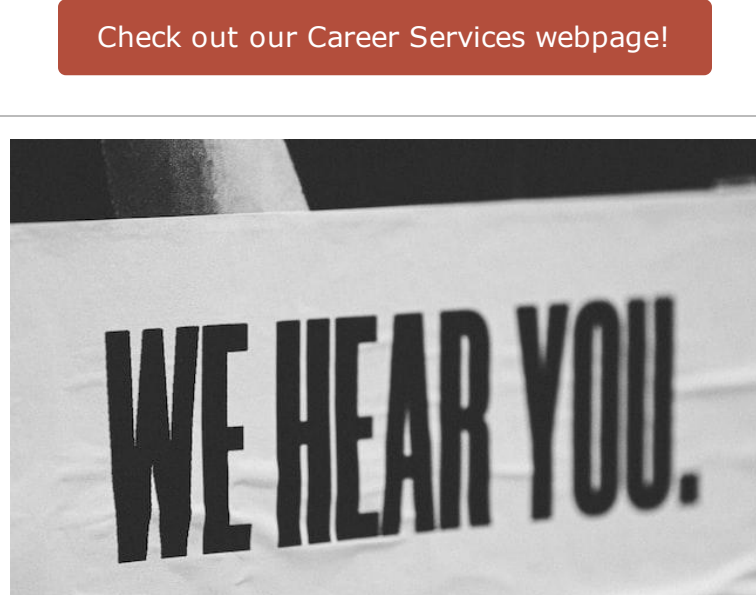
1918 • FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION 2023 EDITION

If you're a life-long learner, then Great Decision is for you! We are very excited to launch into the 17th year of our sponsorship. The series includes local experts speaking on international topics that ultimately will impact life here in Western New York. The topics include:

- War Crimes
- Energy Geopolitics
- Global Famine
- Iran at a Crossroads
- Economic Warfare
- Climate Migration
- China and the U.S.
- Politics in Latin America

The series will be held at IIB on Tuesday nights from February 21st through April 25th. Each session will run from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. There will be no meetings on March 21st or March 28th.

Great Decisions is open to the public. [Click here to register or for more information.](#)



If you or someone you know wants a mission-driven job that is also a great place to work, please take a moment and look at our ever-growing list of open positions on [our Careers webpage](#).

If you already have a job that you like and want to do good deeds for free, we are also looking for volunteers. [Please take a moment to look at our volunteer opportunities.](#)

Check out our Career Services webpage!



Volunteer Survey

Donate five minutes and help volunteers for years to come!

We want to make volunteering a fabulous experience. If you've previously volunteered for us (or have been thinking about volunteering for us), [please take this anonymous survey.](#)

Take a Quick Volunteer Survey!



New American Integration

The NAI department has been busy welcoming and supporting arrivals and New Americans. Understanding that successful resettlement and integration require support from the entire community, the team has been reaching out to form partnerships and collaborations.

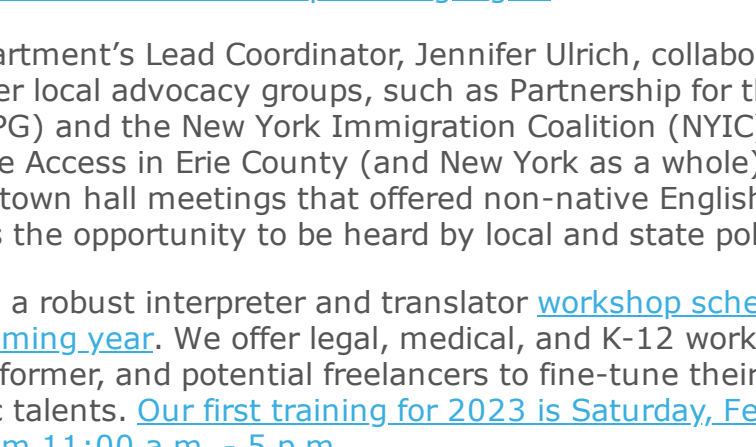
Resettlement continues to be busy with the arrival of 11 families. The families are arriving from Congo, Burma, Somalia, and Columbia. Half are happily joining family or friends that have already been resettled in Buffalo. The average wait to rejoin a family member can be between 9-18 months. We are thrilled to be able to help with the reunification of these individuals.

Since tax season is upon us, we are using this month to focus on educating our clients about filing taxes.

We are also broadening partnership offerings for clients enrolled in our Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Professional Pathways program. The pathways program continues to be very successful, and IIB is in conversation with higher education providers to partner with us for referrals and services.

We're happy to report that we've hired one of our Professional Pathways participants in a professional role here at IIB, placing him in a job that aligns with his previous work experience in his native county of Afghanistan.

Donate to help immigrants and refugees in WNY!



Interpreting and Translation

Our Interpreting team has already completed with ten new agencies while overseeing the successful execution of 1,308 in-person and phone appointments combined since the start of the new year!

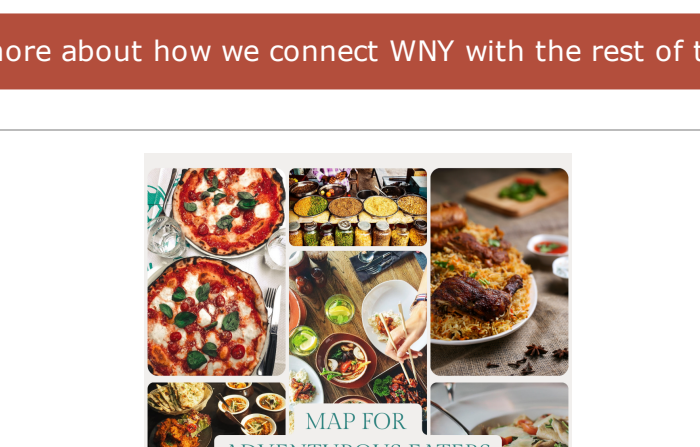
We continue to work closely with Buffalo Public Schools for both interpreting and translation. Our team offers timely support for exams, disciplinary hearings, and informational events, as well as the complete translation of vital documents for parent engagement.

Our Translation Coordinator, Ryan Green, offered support for a state-funded \$30 million Small Business Grant [by translating the application into the state's top 12 languages.](#)

The department's Lead Coordinator, Jennifer Ulrich, collaborated with other local advocacy groups, such as Partnership for the Public Good (PPG) and the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), on Language Access in Erie County (and New York as a whole). They planned town hall meetings that offered non-native English speakers the opportunity to be heard by local and state politicians.

We have a robust interpreter and translator [workshop schedule for the upcoming year](#). We offer legal, medical, and K-12 workshops for current, former, and potential freelancers to fine-tune their linguistic talents. [Our first training for 2023 is Saturday, February 25th, from 11:00 a.m. - 5 p.m.](#)

Do you need Interpreting or Translation done?



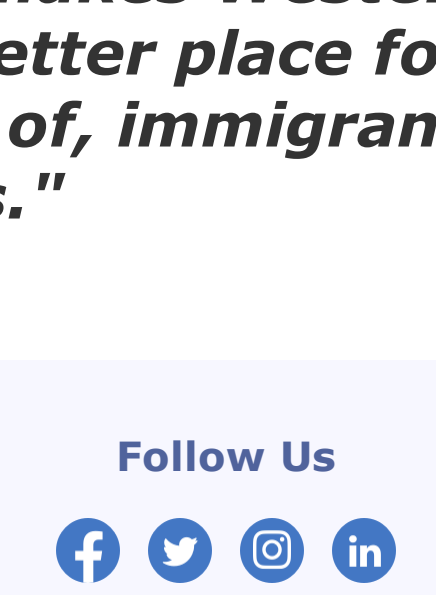
International Exchanges and Education

Our International Exchanges and Education department has already welcomed our first group of international delegates for this year! A delegation from Bhutan visited from January 30-February 2 to study strengthening municipal government systems. We're planning for many more groups, including two Open World projects from Tajikistan and Georgia. We've also been gearing up for two educational events.

In addition to [Great Decisions](#) listed above, we are hosting the annual [Model UN](#) conference at UB on March 21st, with 584 local students from 36 high schools and 21 local college students.

We have also conducted many cultural competency training courses for local hospitals and service providers and refugee health sessions on many topics, including mental health.

Learn more about how we connect WNY with the rest of the world



Map for Adventurous Eaters

One of the wonderful things about living in Western New York is the diversity of the food scene. We benefit from the abundance of ethnic restaurants and international markets. We are updating our Map for Adventurous Eaters so that foodies and folks who are food curious can find our region's delicious places to go. [If you want to help us, please click on this link.](#)

Check out the Map for Adventurous Eaters

"The International Institute of Buffalo makes Western New York a better place for, and because of, immigrants and refugees."

Follow Us

