

## PANELISTS

### **Victoria D. Clark:**

Victoria is a Business Administration with a concentration in Hospitality and Tourism Management student at Tennessee State University. She is a member of the Genders and Sexualities Alliance and the National Society of Leadership. In 2023 she participated in a short term study abroad in Tokyo, Japan.

### **Mina Johnson:**

Mina has been passionately involved in numerous Tennessee improvement initiatives since relocating to Nashville in 1994 as a corporate interpreter and bilingual recruiter. As the first Japanese American elected to Nashville's Metro Council in 2015, Mina served on the Planning, Zoning and Historical Committee; the Public Works Committee; and the Rules, Confirmations and Elections Committee until September 2019. She has been serving on the Planning Commission as Mayor's representative since 2019 and serving on the Metro Historic Zoning Commission. Currently, she is serving on the Sister Cities of Nashville as board president, Abe's Garden Community Board, and USGLC Tennessee advisory council.

### **Byjan Kajaie:**

Byjan was born and raised in Nashville, TN. After graduating from Maryville College in May 2018 with a TESOL degree, she joined the JET Program and worked as an ALT (Assistant Language Teacher) for two years in Akita Prefecture. Byjan returned to the US in August 2020 and worked as a preschool teacher before joining AmeriCorps and completing a year of service. Currently, she works at Safe Haven Family Shelter as a Youth Program Specialist, working with families experiencing homelessness. To stay in touch with her Japan connections, Byjan also currently serves as secretary of the JET Alumni Association Music City.

### **Victoria Mohr:**

Victoria is the daughter of a US diplomat and spent her youth in Wiesbaden, Germany; Tokyo, Japan; London and Croughton, England and Istanbul, Turkey. While in Japan, Victoria worked for three years on three NHK Public TV shows that taught conversational English; NHK Radio; and as a fashion model on the runway, for commercials and magazines. She has been working as a high school teacher for over 20 years, and currently teaches Japanese at Lebanon High School. In March, 2023, she led a group of nine students to Japan after being selected for the Kakehashi Project.

### **Asami Nakano:**

Asami Nakano has been teaching the Japanese language at Vanderbilt since 2017. She previously worked as a Japan Outreach Initiative (JOI) Coordinator at University of Tennessee 2013-2015. In addition to teaching in the US, she has also taught in Argentina and Japan. Asami received her B.A. from University of Wisconsin and M.A. in Education from University of Tennessee. Her interests include designing effective language and cultural courses as well as community outreach. Asami hopes her students will participate in collaborative learning while gaining critical thinking skills, new perspectives and broaden their understanding of the world.

**Tye Ebel (Moderator):**

Tye's relationship with Japan dates back to childhood when his family hosted a Japanese foreign exchange student for a year. He later studied Japanese in high school and participated in a summer homestay in rural Japan. Following college, Tye spent three years teaching English in Japan as part of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. He then moved to Vancouver, where he earned a Masters in Policy focused on the Asia-Pacific region from the University of British Columbia. He has been on the staff of the Consulate-General of Japan in Nashville since 2015, where, among other things, he runs the Japanese government exchange programs for a five state region that includes TN, KY, AR, MS and LA.

**Dr. Vaidas Lukosias (Introductory Speaker):**

Vaidas is a tenured Associate Professor of business administration and marketing in the College of Business at Tennessee State University. He is a forward-thinking academic leader, who earned his B.S. in civil engineering from Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, his M.S. in technology management from Helsinki University of Technology (now Aalto University), then his Ph.D. in business administration and marketing from New Mexico State University. He has presented at numerous national and international conferences, published articles on global education, and served as President of the Association of Collegiate Marketing Educators. Throughout his academic career, Vaidas has been deeply involved with international education through various avenues. He has served as the Chair of the International Education Committee in the College of Business at Tennessee State University, where he was also a member of the International Advisory Board. He has led study abroad programs with the Tennessee Consortium for International Studies since 2013, and has taken students on numerous study abroad programs to Japan, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, he taught at Dankook University in South Korea and Nuertingen-Geislingen University in Germany. He is an avid traveler and outdoorsman, and enjoys visiting national parks in North America.