



MOTHERS  
FOR JUSTICE & EQUALITY



2024 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



Dear Friends,

There is no greater calling in our time than to make sacrifices for those who are marginalized, humiliated, and, in some cases, criminalized simply for being who they are.

Not everyone has the ability—or the desire—to blend in. They cannot just alter a name, remove a pronoun, or hide their identity to shield themselves from those who seek to erase their existence. Instead, they carry their truth boldly, showing up every day with both a smile and a broken heart. They live in constant fear that what they cherish most—their rights, their families, their very existence—could be taken away at any moment.

We at **Mothers for Justice and Equality (MJE)** aim to be a source of **strength, resolution, and support**. We know that by lifting our community's mothers, we are lifting the communities as a whole.

I am eager to share the work we've done to help mothers, youth, and families heal through **Economic Empowerment**.

Many single mothers in our communities who are living in poverty will endure poor mental health through social stresses such as health scares, job losses, homelessness, domestic violence, street and gun violence, and related issues. Sadly, so much of their world is out of their control. These stresses affect the mother's ability to provide her children with a safe and nurturing environment.

Research teaches us that single mothers living in poverty are more likely to experience feelings of worry, nervousness, or anxiety. The mortality rate of the mother decreases, and this trauma is passed on to her children, which inadvertently leads to generational poverty and trauma.

At MJE, we help individuals of all ages to become empowered and ready for community involvement. Our operating model hinges on two fundamental mechanisms: **Education and Engagement**. This is our approach to delivering trauma-informed services, providing each individual with an Individual Service Plan (ISP), training, and case management. Our Health Equity and Community Engagement trauma-informed workshops are provided in a healing environment. Plus, we provide a safe space for youth to challenge inequality and violence by fostering a sense of leadership and belonging.

Our approach to this problem is working. We are seeing clients obtain employment, return to school, and obtain affordable childcare and housing. Many clients are signing up for emotional health services to help alleviate some of their day-to-day social stresses.

I hope you will take some time to read through this 2024 Impact Report and share your thoughts with us. There is much work to do, but I believe together, we can see our families quality of life improve with our **Healing through Economic Empowerment** model.

In Peace,

Monalisa Smith  
Founder, President and CEO  
Mothers for Justice and Equality



# Board of Directors



## Renée Omoladé – Board Chair

Renée is the Director of Boston Community Hub Schools. She focuses on Liberatory Education and aims to organize the assets and resources of school communities to improve the academic achievement of talented Boston Public School scholars. Renée earned a BA in Sociology with a double minor in Africana Studies and Gender & Women’s Studies from Emmanuel College.



## Eileen Paterson – Clerk & Secretary

Eileen, a retired Administrator, is a remarkably courageous black woman grounded in her Christian faith. She is a daughter, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Eileen has an Associate’s Degree in Business Management from Fisher Junior College and a Compensation and Benefits Management certificate from Northeastern University.



## Nana Akomaa Kyerematen – Treasurer

Nana Akomaa Kyerematen “Hannah” works for Clarity of Mind Mental Health, Inc. in Randolph, MA. She is the recipient of a Boston City Council Award for an exemplary community mental health outreach provider. She received her first degree in Biological Sciences from the University of Southern California and her graduate degree in Counseling and Public Health from Tufts University.



## Monalisa Smith – Founder, President and CEO

Monalisa founded MJE in 2010 following the loss of her nephew to local violence. She gathered fellow mothers to share their concerns about the gross amount of violence against children. The group agreed upon the mission to end neighborhood violence and that mothers can become catalysts for change in our communities.



## Amanda Merricks – Director

Amanda, a public servant with over 23 years at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is committed to social impact, leadership, and entertainment. She holds leadership roles in Blacks in Government (BIG), produces a Stand-Up Comedy series, organizes events like the 5K Turkey Trot, and is actively involved with Mothers for Justice and Equality.



## William Rodriguez – Director

William is a senior lecturer at BU Wheelock College of Education & Human Development. He primarily teaches youth justice and advocacy, juvenile law, and positive youth development. Willie supported the original development of the MJE “You Matter” Program, and was instrumental in MJE obtaining space for the annual Mothers Against Violence National Conference at BU.



## Reverend Dasha Webster-Homcil – Director

Reverend Webster-Homicil is originally from Trinidad and Tobago. She is a graduate of Northwestern University with a focus on Russian and Eastern European Studies. With a recent retirement from a remarkable 45-year career in banking, Reverend Webster-Homicil brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the table.



## Who We Are

We at Mothers for Justice and Equality (MJE) aim to **end neighborhood violence** by empowering mothers, youth, and families to challenge the normalization of violence through two key methods: **EDUCATION and ENGAGEMENT**. We believe Mothers are fierce and nurturing protectors; when given proper tools, they can channel their energy to build neighborhoods where playgrounds are safe and sidewalks are non-threatening.

## Who We Serve

Violence in our communities does not just impact direct victims – grieving mothers, siblings, and families are often left behind, struggling with trauma and loss. We at MJE are here to help.

We serve Individuals & Families in Boston who are:

- Facing racial inequities
- Endangered by community violence
- Unemployed or at risk for job loss
- Living in poverty
- Homeless/risk of homelessness
- Recent/Undocumented Immigrants
- ESL Speakers
- Struggling with physical and mental health needs
- Young parents
- Opportunity Youth
- Formerly Incarcerated community members (returning citizens)



## Vision for Success

To ensure our children a promising future, they must have the support of the entire community. MJE has the vision of a world in which it is never normal or acceptable for children to be murdered. We believe that change will occur as the internalized expectations of what is acceptable in our neighborhoods change.

***Mother to mother, family to family, block to block, we can change the story of our streets.***



# MOTHERS

FOR JUSTICE & EQUALITY

## Mission Statement

The mission of MJE is to end neighborhood violence by empowering mothers and youth to challenge the normalization of violence and become effective catalysts for change in their homes, schools, and communities. We engage mothers, youth, & families by providing targeted support, educational opportunities, and the opportunity to advocate for peace as a community.

## Racial Equity

At MJE, we recognize how discrimination and trauma are intertwined. Our approach guides victims toward healing and empowerment, fostering community leaders from within. Our team mirrors the diversity of the communities we serve, including Spanish and Haitian Creole speakers on our team. Through ongoing Multicultural Case training led by Nana Akomaa Kyerematen "Hannah", MJE's Board Treasurer, an expert in Multicultural Therapeutic Response, we strive to meet our clients' diverse cultural needs.

## What Matters Most

The school-to-prison pipeline is forthcoming for our young adults, youth, and families. A single mishap or misunderstanding can cost the opportunity to go to college or get a job because of inequities in the systems in which we live. Young adults, single parents, and teen parents in our communities do not see a bright future for themselves; they see poverty and a need to earn money. They experience racism in the networks in which they travel. Criminal activity and gang involvement become viable ways to make money and gain connections they lack. Many have few role models showing them another way.

## Economic Empowerment

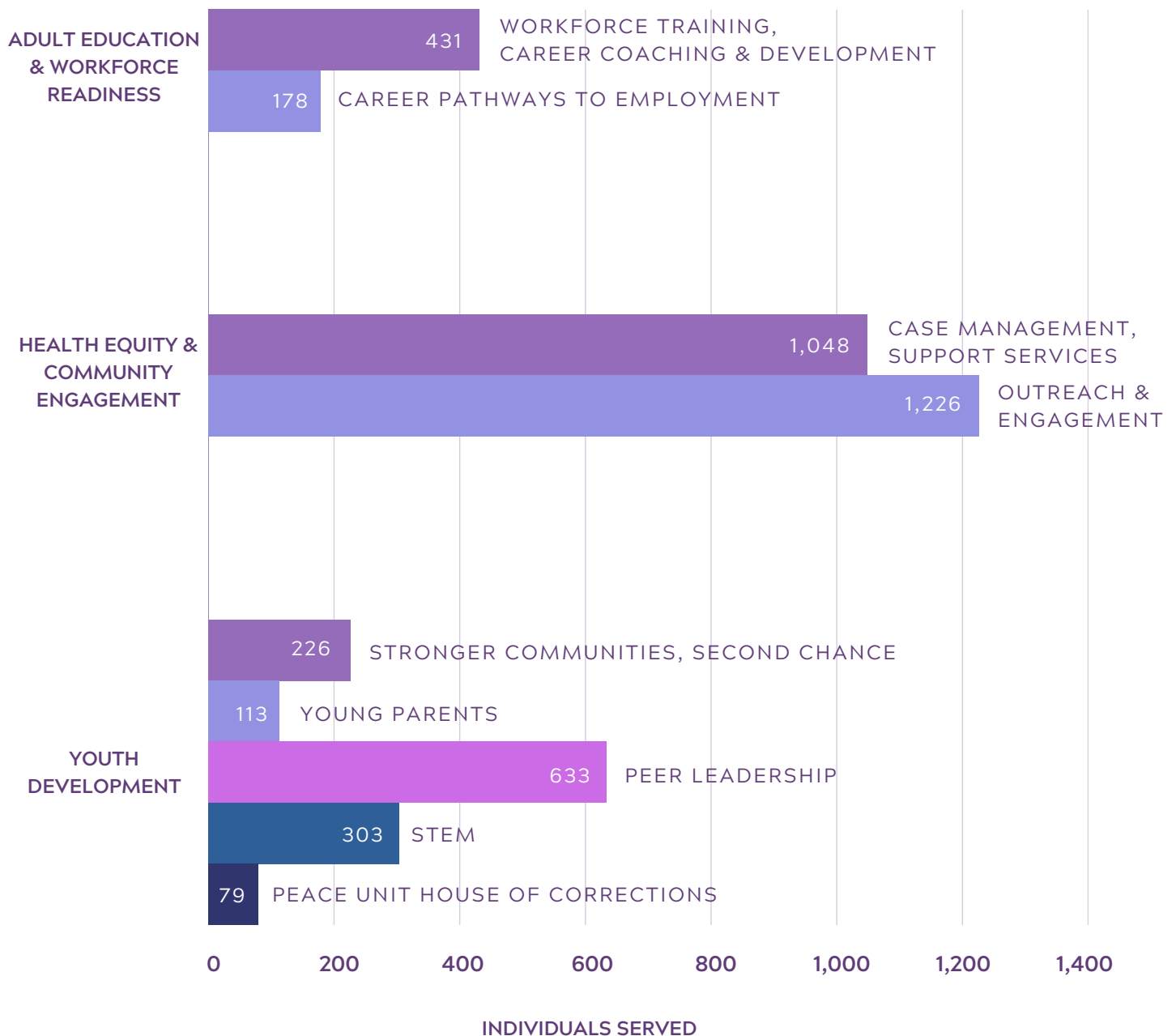
MJE is founded on the model of Economic Empowerment. The main assets of MJE clients include a commitment to supporting one another and a strong desire to improve their circumstances. Participants realize they are not alone in their struggles. While setting motivating and attainable personal goals, they become empowered to advocate for change with their friends and family.



MJE has achieved major milestones across  
all programs, serving

# 4,237 individuals

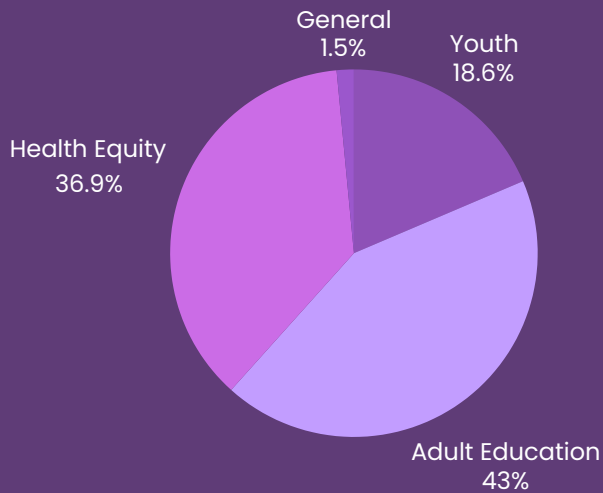
in 2024 and touched **over 3,000 more** thanks to our  
outreach efforts!



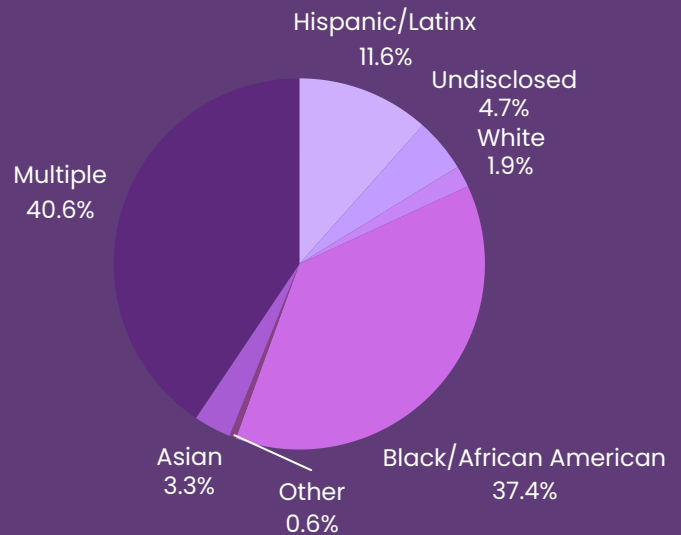


# Demographics\*

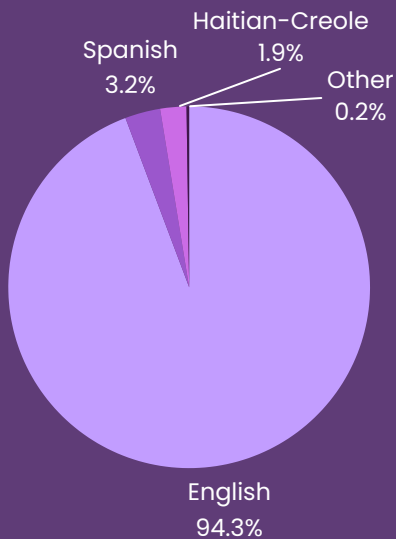
## Workshop Departments



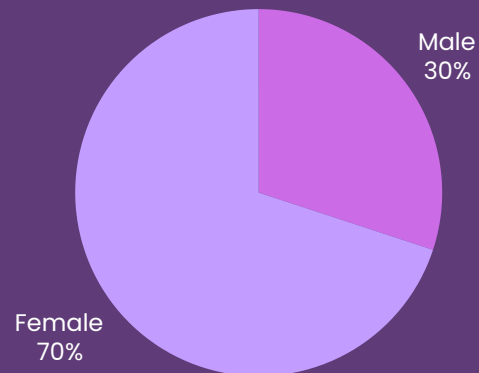
## Race/Ethnicities



## Languages



## Gender Identities



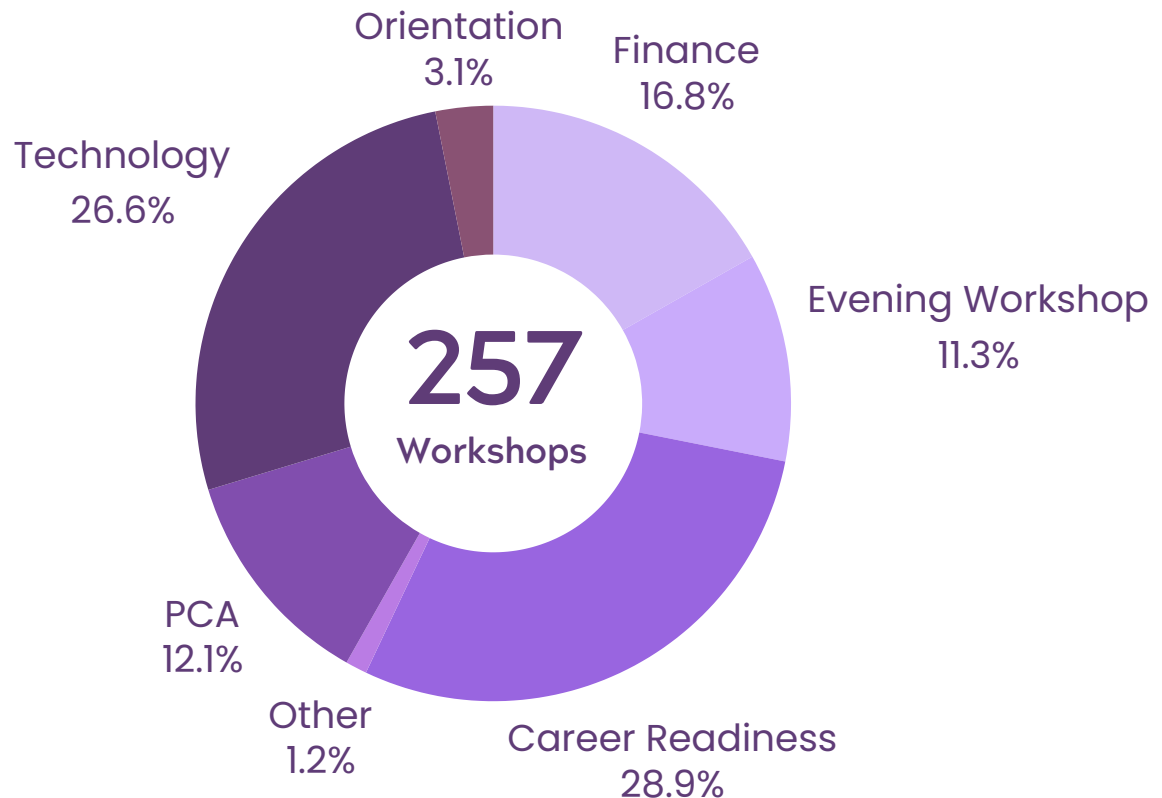
\*Only accounts for workshop participants



# Adult Education & Workforce Readiness

Our Adult Education & Workforce Readiness department is dedicated to supporting individuals affected by trauma and chronic unemployment, helping them become empowered community members and viable candidates for re-entering the workforce. We focus on the social-emotional health of low-income clients to help them achieve **economic mobility** and build stability in their homes and communities. The Adult Education & Workforce Readiness department supports clients in overcoming trauma and barriers which prevent them from living successful lives.

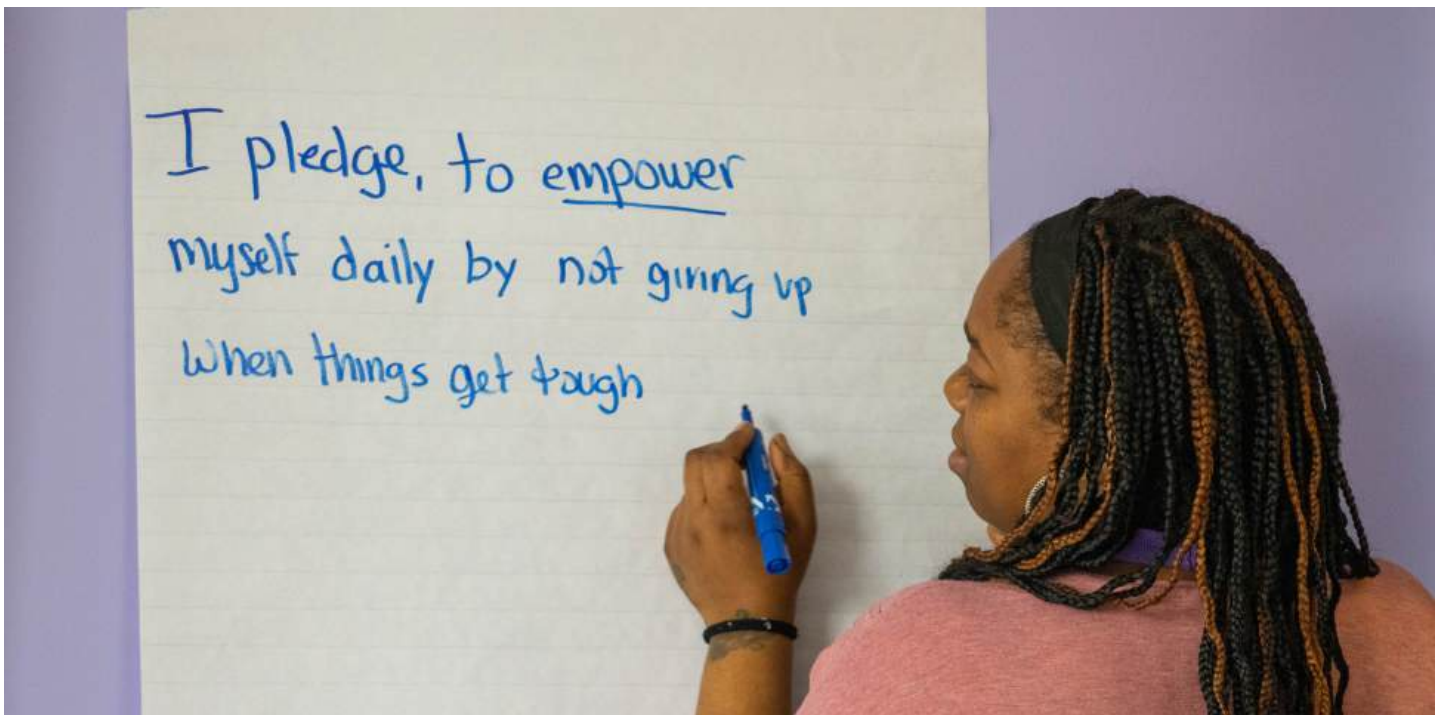
## Adult Education & Workforce Readiness Workshops





# Success Story

Tia found her way to Mothers for Justice and Equality (MJE) after returning to Boston from living abroad for 15 years. She was adjusting to life as a single mom and facing some tough financial challenges. MJE helped her through financial workshops, résumé building, and college placement assistance, which led her to pursue a nursing career—a path she hadn’t considered before. Thanks to MJE’s support, she completed a nursing program, passed her state exam, and landed a job in the field. Tia credits MJE’s consistent check-ins and the emotional support she received for helping her juggle school, work, and raising her kids. Now, with a 4.0 GPA, she highly recommends MJE for their practical resources and personal guidance.



“
 *It wasn’t just one specific seminar or program that helped me, but knowing that I had someone to rely on for support was so valuable. Whether it was financial advice, résumé help, or just having someone check in on me regularly—it made a huge difference. Having that kind of support during such a challenging time is something I’ll never forget.*



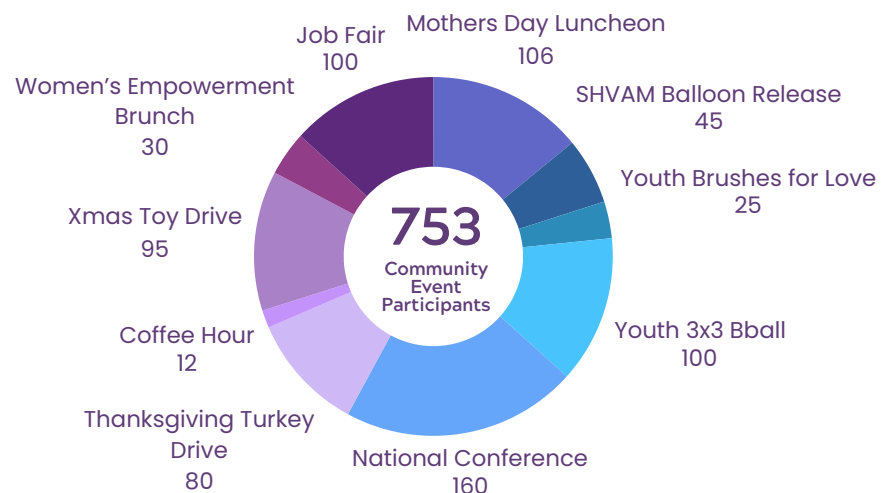
# Health Equity & Community Engagement

At MJE, we believe that the recovery of the individual is essential for the recovery of the family and the community. After experiencing trauma, one may intellectually understand the event without recognizing its true impact on their state of being. Trauma can disrupt a person's sense of balance and requires a **positive healing environment** to restore equilibrium. Community Outreach is conducted to bring awareness to the community on the programs and services available at MJE.

## Health Equity Workshops



## Community Events



# Success Story



“  
*Working with MJE gave me the clarity and support I needed to make real changes in my life. It wasn't just about the financial advice – it was knowing that there were people there who cared about my success and were rooting for me every step of the way.*  
 ”

Sophia, a breast cancer survivor, mother of three, and active member in her community found her way to MJE during the Covid-19 pandemic, when she was looking for support. She was struggling with her health, raising her kids at home, and trying to navigate life during such a tough time. **MJE became a lifeline**, offering programs such as **mental health support, financial literacy**, and even **technology**. Sophia not only received help but also gave back, using her skills to help translate and assist others. One of the most meaningful moments for her was receiving the **Courage and Conviction Award**, which made her feel seen and appreciated for all the hard work she's done in her community. She's also been deeply involved in helping her kids, getting them engaged in MJE's youth programs, and continuing to support others in any way she can. Through MJE, she's found a sense of **purpose and community**, and she continues to encourage others to get involved, reminding them that healing and growth happen together.

“  
*It takes a village... and that's what Mothers for Justice and Equality is doing—trying to help out our village.*  
 ”



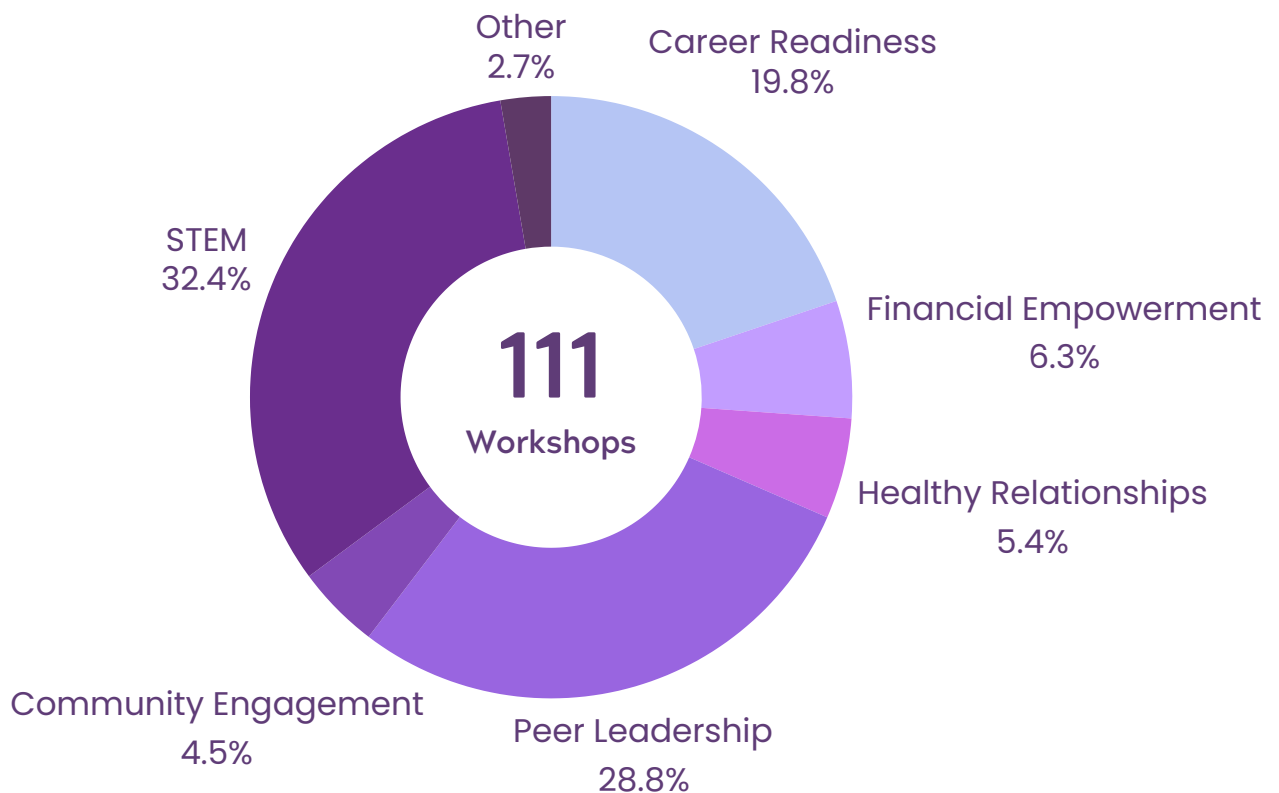


# Youth Development

## Ages 24 and under

At MJE, our youth engagement and education programs address the root causes of violence by **empowering youth** to lead, heal from trauma, and enter the workforce. Through relationship building, civic engagement, and leadership training, we equip youth with the skills and experiences to create positive change.

### Youth Development Workshops



“

*[MJE] is a resource you definitely want. You don't want to throw it in the trash because you're going to regret it."*

”





# Success Story

“

*Being a single mother, it's not as embarrassing as I once thought. The [young parent] program helped me believe in myself, and I don't have depression anymore because they gave me all the resources I needed.*

”



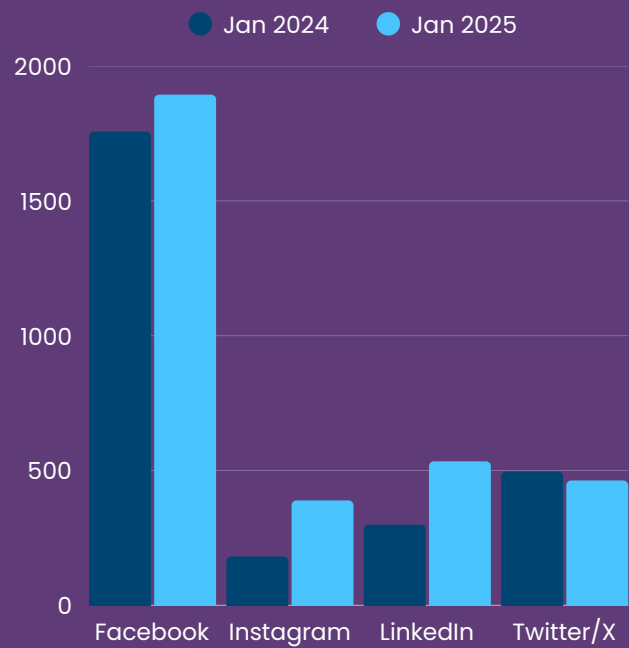
Shay's experience with MJE has been life-changing over the past two years. As a young single mom facing mental health challenges and financial stress, she found the **support and resources** she needed to overcome obstacles. The program helped her **build confidence**, offering everything from **job search assistance** to **emotional support**, allowing her to believe in herself and navigate tough times. Since graduating, Shay has stayed connected with MJE, feeling like part of a supportive community. She encourages other young parents to take advantage of the program, which provided the tools and encouragement that helped her **turn her life around**.

# Marketing Communications

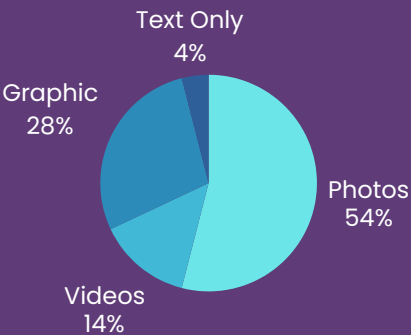
Marketing Communications uses various channels and strategies to deliver targeted messages that promote a brand, product, or service. For-profit businesses highlight customer benefits, while non-profits emphasize community impact.

At MJE, Marketing Communications are key to our outreach. Using strategic tools and platforms, we communicate our mission, build networks, and foster healing. Thoughtful marketing helps raise awareness, create collaboration, and amplify our impact. In 2024, we've been expanding our platforms to engage with even more communities and create stronger connections!

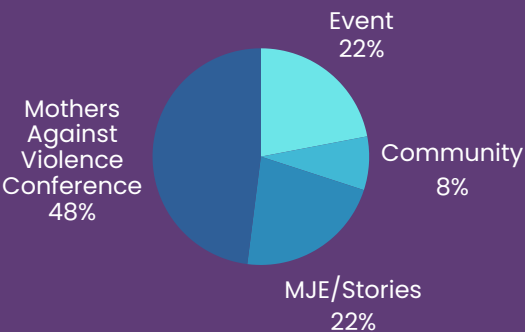
Social Media Follower Growth



Media Type\*



Theme\*



*\*Based on top performing posts from each social media platform*

## Most Engaged Posts of 2024



Follow Us

## Facebook



3,358 Engagements

## LinkedIn



2,321 Engagements

## Instagram



1,560 Engagements





# Women's Empowerment Brunch

February was a month of empowerment at MJE, as we dedicated ourselves to celebrating **Black History Month** with impactful programs and events. Our **Women's Empowerment Brunch** in honor of Black History Month was a huge highlight, featuring a stirring speech from **MJE Board Chair Renée Omoladé**, sharing her wealth of experience in community leadership and advocacy. We also heard touching words from our own **Monalisa Smith** as she stressed that violence and poverty amongst our communities **IS NOT OKAY.**





# Youth 3x3 Basketball Throwdown

As spring approaches and the warm weather emerges, for many, it's a beautiful time of year when families are naturally drawn to outdoor, public spaces. On one side of the city, cherry blossoms bloom in Boston Gardens, and families enjoy the beauty of the spring flowers. But on the other side, *our* side, **fear emerges** instead. As the warm weather rises, so does the **anxiety of community violence**.

To help relieve the tension of community anxiety, our **Youth Department** hosted their first ever **3x3 Basketball Throwdown** at Norfolk Park in Mattapan. We infiltrated a space where crime and violence are high to establish a sense of **safety and community** and remind the public that violence **IS NOT OKAY**.

The free, family-friendly, public event brought **over 100 members** of our community together. We had thrilling basketball games that kept sports fans on the edge of their seats! And we didn't forget the little ones – we made sure they had a fantastic and engaging time at our **STEM** table, filled with soapy bubbles and bubbly smiles. Laughter and camaraderie filled the air at Norfolk Park and fun was had by all!







# 10th Annual Mother's Day Luncheon

Love and gratitude were in the air at our **10th Annual Mother's Day Luncheon!** With a full house of **106 fabulously dressed people**, we came together to network, honor, and celebrate mothers who have led by example, overcome trauma, and are consistent role models to their children and communities.

Our keynote speaker, **Cyntoria Grant**, beautifully stated, **"It's a mother's love that defies logic, persisting through the challenges of raising children, routed in the selflessness of love."**



## Courage and Conviction Award Winners

Tasha Carrington  
Remy Lawrence  
Sophia Michel  
Taevoahn Palmer  
Andrea Semedo  
Patricia Thompson





# 10th Annual Mothers Against Violence National Conference



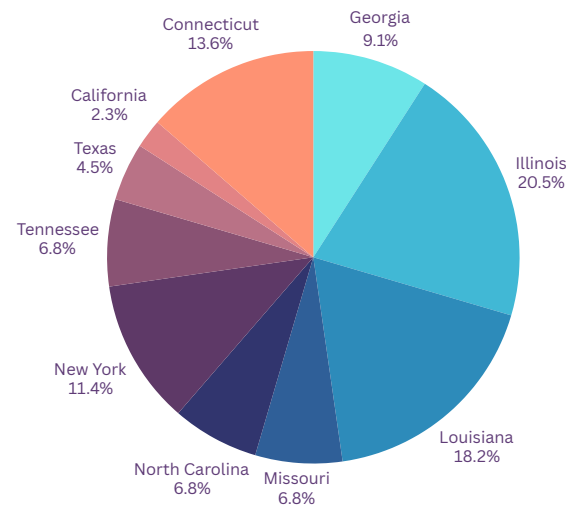
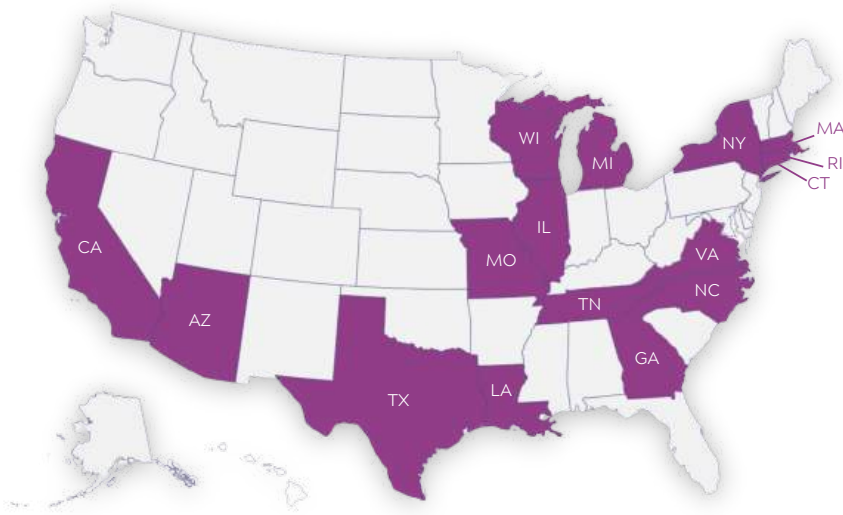
On October 17-18, 2024, we held our **10th Annual Mothers Against Violence National Conference (MAV)** at Boston University. Our goal with this conference is to **empower women and families**, helping them turn their **pain into purpose**. Over the last **10 years**, we've addressed tragic losses from community violence while promoting peace. We've heard inspiring stories from mothers and leaders nationwide who make a difference everyday, offering hope to underserved families. We've also honored individuals with the **MJE Courage and Conviction Awards** for their outstanding advocacy in protecting at-risk children from street violence.

This year's conference, with over **160 guests**, provided essential training, mentoring, and support for women nationwide affected by loss and violence. Collectively, we have touched **200,000 lives across the United States**. We have convened workshops, organized marches and rallies, and started foundations and organizations. Through our work together, mothers who lost children to violence receive a space to **Heal, Restore, and Rebuild**; neighborhoods that lost hope receive a sense of hope. Safe neighborhood parks are built to remember our children, which children are now using without fear.



# Mothers Against Violence Learning Community Cohort

## MJE is not just local - We touch communities nationwide!



**MAV Learning Community** is an online space dedicated to fostering **psychological safety, healing, exploration, and connection**. This supportive environment empowers individuals to learn, share resources, and build meaningful relationships with others who share similar experiences. Through training, resources, and growth opportunities, the community **encourages members to connect and thrive together**.

If you lead a **women-led nonprofit** focused on **healing and sustainable growth**, we invite you to join us! Become part of a community of like-minded changemakers dedicated to impactful movements and personal wellness. Together, we support one another through **unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith**.







# Memorial Balloon Release for Survivors Against Homicide Victims Awareness Month

Statistics from The City of Boston underscore the far-reaching impact of community violence. Our population is struggling with the impact of trauma due to community violence, homicide, domestic violence, and related issues. The results of violence and murder do not just impact direct victims, but the grieving mothers, siblings, and families who are often left behind. Studies have shown that this target population faces challenges in all aspects of life due to the impact of trauma and grief. Recognizing this, there's a growing awareness of the need for **Survivors of Homicide Victims Awareness Month (SHVAM)** to provide support and acknowledgment for those affected by loss, aligning with our priorities at MJE. On December 7th, 2024, **over 40 community members** of all ages gathered with us for a **Memorial Balloon Release** at Norfolk Park in Mattapan, honoring lost loved ones by writing messages on biodegradable balloons and releasing them into the sky. The event fostered moments of prayer, sharing impact statements, and comforting conversations over warm cocoa and donuts, offering solace amidst remembrance.







# Thanksgiving Turkey Drive

The Thanksgiving Turkey Drive is a cherished tradition at MJE, where the spirit of giving back shines brightly. With everyone coming together, we were able to make a difference in the lives of **over 70 families** in need. The smiles on their faces and the gratitude in their hearts reminded us of the **power of community** and **compassion**. As we reflect on this year's drive, we are filled with a sense of joy and fulfillment, knowing that our collective efforts brought warmth and nourishment to those who needed it most. This is more than just a drive; it is a **symbol of unity**, kindness, and the true essence of the holiday season.







# Christmas Toy Drive

Our Christmas Toy Drive was an absolute blast, catering to the enjoyment of all ages! We are proud to say that this was one of our most popular Toy Drives yet, with **95 guests** and a total of **320 toys** gifted to spread holiday cheer! Guests were greeted with a festive atmosphere, adorned with twinkling lights and holiday decorations. Craft stations provided a space for unleashing creativity. The air was filled with the irresistible aroma of hot cocoa and the sweet scent of holiday treats, tempting everyone to indulge in the seasonal delights. Laughter and merriment echoed throughout the venue as guests danced and sang along to beloved Christmas tunes, spreading cheer and warmth. And to top it all off, the highlight of the evening was Santa's special visit, spreading holiday cheer to all who attended!





## Strategic Partnerships

ABCD Head Start Mattapan  
Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology  
Boston Public Health Commission  
Boston Public Schools  
Boston University  
Brigham and Women's Hospital  
Children's Services of Roxbury  
Community Resources for Justice  
Day and Evening Academy  
Department of Transitional Assistance  
Department of Youth Services  
Dimock Center  
Epiphany Child Care Center  
Justice Resource Institute  
Massachusetts Attorney General's Office  
Mattapan Neighborhood Trauma Team  
Mattapan Health Center  
Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance  
McGrath House  
New England Culinary Arts Training Program  
Partners Health Care  
St. Mary's Center for Women and Children

## Contracts

Boston Public Health Commission  
Boston Police Department – Charles Shannon Award  
City of Boston Success Link  
City of Boston Digital Equity  
City of Boston Community Development Block Grant  
City of Boston Youth Fund  
Department of Early and Secondary Education – ASOST  
Department of Public Health – GVP  
Department of Transitional Assistance – CIES  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services – Stronger Communities  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services – Community Empowerment  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts Restorative Justice Award  
Mattapan Community Health Center NTT  
Massachusetts Office of Victims Assistance  
SNAP

**MJE wants to express our  
immense appreciation for your  
continued support. Thank you.**

## Foundation and Corporate Grants

Anna B. Stearns Foundation  
Boston Children's Hospital  
Bushrod H. Campbell and Adah F. Hall Charity Fund  
Carl and Ruth Shapiro Foundation  
Citizens Bank  
Cummings Foundation  
DCU For Kids Foundation  
Eastern Bank Foundation  
Fish Family Foundation  
Foundation and Corporate Grants  
Imago Dei Fund  
John Hancock MLK Summer Fund  
JP Morgan Chase  
Liberty Mutual Foundation  
Mass General Brigham  
Massachusetts Convention Center Authority  
Needham Bank  
Once Here Foundation  
Paul and Edith Babson Foundation  
Perpetual Trust for Charitable Giving managed by Bank of America Philanthropic Trusts  
Philanthropy MA Summer Fund  
Rockland Trust  
Skill Works  
State Street Foundation  
Suffolk County DAs office  
TD Bank Foundation  
TJX Foundation  
United Way of Massachusetts Bay  
Yawkey Foundation





# Follow us on Social Media



Stay up-to-date with MJE! Your support helps us spread the word on our important mission to end neighborhood violence.



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Instagram - [@mothersforjusticeandequality](https://www.instagram.com/@mothersforjusticeandequality)



Linkedin - [@Mothers for Justice and Equality](https://www.linkedin.com/company/@Mothers%20for%20Justice%20and%20Equality)



Twitter/X - [@wesayitsnotokay](https://twitter.com/@wesayitsnotokay)



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**MOTHERS**  
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Neighbor to Neighbor,  
together we can  
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