



10th
Annual

Mothers Against Violence National Conference

OCT 17TH - 18TH, 2024
BOSTON UNIVERSITY



MOTHERS
FOR JUSTICE & EQUALITY



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Mattapan Community Health Center ***Congratulates***



"Mothers for Justice and Equality"

***On Their 10th Annual
Mothers Against Violence
National Conference***



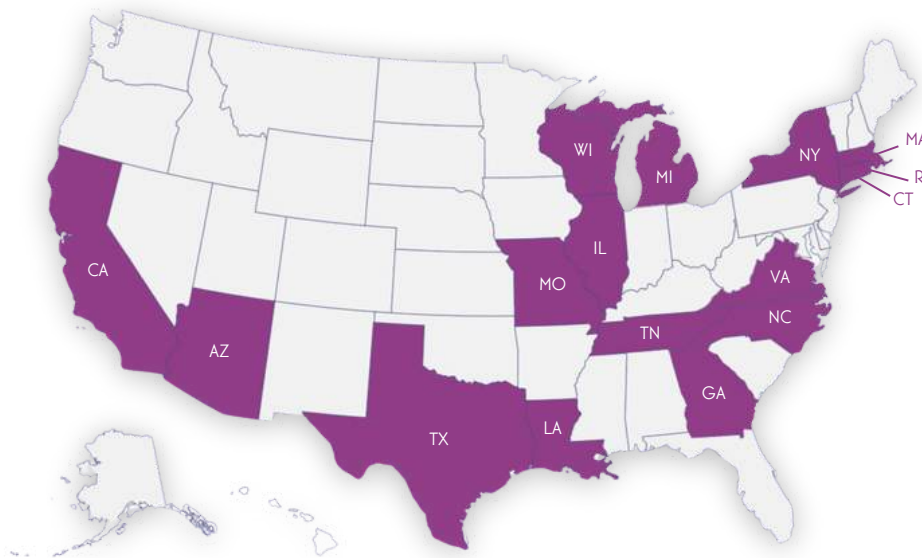
***We are committed to our Partnership and
the work we do collectively through the
Mattapan Neighborhood Trauma Team to
support families impacted by trauma.
Together we can and do make a difference.***

1575 Blue Hill Avenue
Mattapan, MA 02126



Phone: 617-296-0061
Web: www.mattapanhc.org

Welcome!



About the Conference

Welcome to the **10th Annual Mothers Against Violence National Conference (MAV)**! Today, we join together to listen and lift the voices of one another. Today, we provide training, mentoring, and, most importantly, support for people whose families have experienced trauma by loss and violence nationwide. Together we learn new skills, develop new relationships, and increase our capacity through workshops, networking, and more. We look to each other to be change-makers in our communities, expand the MAV network nationwide, and strengthen our efforts to fight for peace in our streets.

The MAV Conference has empowered mothers and families to move their pain into purpose, learn about the necessary tools, resources, and support to process our collective loss due to community violence and lead our communities toward peace.

More than 800 individuals from across the country have attended the conference, bringing what they have learned to thousands of communities, sparking a chain of education and hope.

Participating Organizations

Christian Community Action - Hamden, CT

Mothers and Others for Justice - Branford, Hamden, New Haven, CT

Mother's Against Gang Violence - Atlanta, GA

Operation Recovery Inc. - Marietta, GA

There Is Always Hope, Safer Foundation - Chicago, IL

Chicago Survivors - Chicago, IL

Imani Dream Angel / Rincon - Chicago, IL

Mt. Calvary Baptist Church - Chicago, IL

Saving Ourselves - Chicago, IL

Church Foodbank - Jeanerette, LA

Jeanerette Matter - Jeanerette, LA

Momma On a Mission, Inc. - Kansas City, MO

Corey's Network, Inc - Kansas City, MO

Dr. Larry George CDC, Inc. - Mount Holly, NC

JCI - Holly Springs, NC

Boots on the Ground - Shelby, NC

Parents Of Angel Children - Albany, NY

Where Do We Go From Here Inc - Jamaica, NY

Tennessee Gamechangers United for Justice and Equality - Paris, TN

Golden Foundation - Nashville, TN

Southeast Food Bank - Port Arthur, TX

Praise Chapel feeding the Homeless - Pearland, TX

Mothers of Murdered Children - Phoenix, AZ

Letter from Monalisa Smith

Dear Friends,

You will never know courage until courage is all you have! These are the words spoken by women traveling to Boston across the United States. They are “Mothers of Courage and Conviction.” Today, we celebrate the 10th Annual Mothers Against Violence National Conference. 10 years of growing, healing, restoring, and empowering. This is more than just a conference; it is a place for those who have lost loved ones to senseless violence to come together. It is where we lift up one another and declare our shared commitment: Be the change and lead the change.

Across America, our Black and Brown youth are losing their lives to senseless street violence. Mothers, fathers, and siblings are left hopeless, trying to manage the pain of losing their loved one. We are seeing an increase in poverty, mental health illnesses, and gun violence in our neighborhoods, all fostering a continuation of loss of life. 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.

Today, as a united front, we say, “It’s Not Okay” for children to live in fear, “It’s Not Okay” for a parent to bury their child prematurely, and “It’s Not Okay” for a child to be incarcerated. Today, we take action; we are healing together, sharing best practices, and creating a network of courageous leaders. We are positioned to help change the storyline of our communities. We publicly denounce violence as an unacceptable way of life and loss in our neighborhoods; “It’s Not Okay!” Today, I commend you on your endurance, resilience, persistence, love, and strength.



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 received a space to heal; neighborhoods that lost hope received a sense of hope. Safe neighborhood parks were built to remember our children, which children are now using without fear.

I want to personally say “Thank you” and welcome to our 10th Annual Mothers Against Violence Conference. I hope you will heal, learn, share, and connect to mothers leading change across America.

Mother to Mother, neighbor to neighbor, together we can change the story of our streets and heal in the process.

In Peace,

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



City of Boston, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor
MICHELLE WU

October 17, 2024

Dear Friends,

It is my honor to welcome you to the 10th Annual Mothers Against Violence Conference. I want to thank Monalisa Smith and everyone at Mothers for Justice and Equality for more than a decade of making Boston a safer, healthier city.

Our administration is driven by one goal: To make Boston a home for everyone.

We know that above all, this work is built on trust. Trust that the place you live is safe for you and your family. That the people around you will love and protect you. That you have what you need to build a life you can be proud of.

At the City, we are grateful to be partnering with Mothers for Justice and Equality to build that trust—to make our shared vision a reality. Whether we're helping returning citizens reintegrate into our communities; providing job opportunities to young people and single parents; or offering digital literacy training and devices to residents, we know that the work we do together forms the building blocks of a stronger, safer Boston.

As Mayor, as a mom, and as a resident, the work you do to bring peace, purpose, and healing to our communities moves me. From teaching kids the science of ice cream-making and boosting adults' financial literacy, to cultivating the next generation of neighborhood leaders, it fills me with joy to know that Boston's families are growing through your care.

On behalf of all of our communities here in Boston: Thank you for protecting and empowering our people. Thank you for helping us build a Boston where everyone feels at home.

In strength, solidarity, and sisterhood,

Michelle Wu
Mayor of Boston



Boston University Office of the President

Melissa L. Gilliam
President
One Silber Way
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
617-353-2200 president@bu.edu



October 2024

Dear Friends,

On behalf of Boston University, I warmly welcome you to our campus for the Mothers for Justice and Equality 10th Annual Mothers Against Violence National Conference.

We eagerly anticipate the day when you can look back on your efforts and feel you have fully achieved your mission, yet we understand that there is still significant work ahead to eradicate violence in our communities. Your organization's innovative and collaborative approach is not only vital but truly inspiring.

It is a privilege and our honor to host you. Over a century ago, Boston University's third president described our institution as one "in the heart of the city, in the service of the city." This vision resonates with us as we embrace your dedication to fostering partnerships that strengthen our communities and enhance our connections with one another.

I wish you a conference filled with meaningful dialogue and collaboration. Thank you for your relentless commitment to building a safer and brighter future for all.

Sincerely,

Melissa Gilliam
President



About Mothers for Justice and Equality

Who We Are

Mothers for Justice and Equality (MJE) aims to end neighborhood violence by empowering mothers and youth to challenge the normalization of violence. 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.

Since 2010, MJE's trauma-informed services have supported the academic, workforce development, health, and wellness needs of those impacted by community violence, including single mothers, youth, and their families.

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. Mothers are influential changemakers in our communities, and when given the right tools, they become advocates for transformation.

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.

Who We Serve

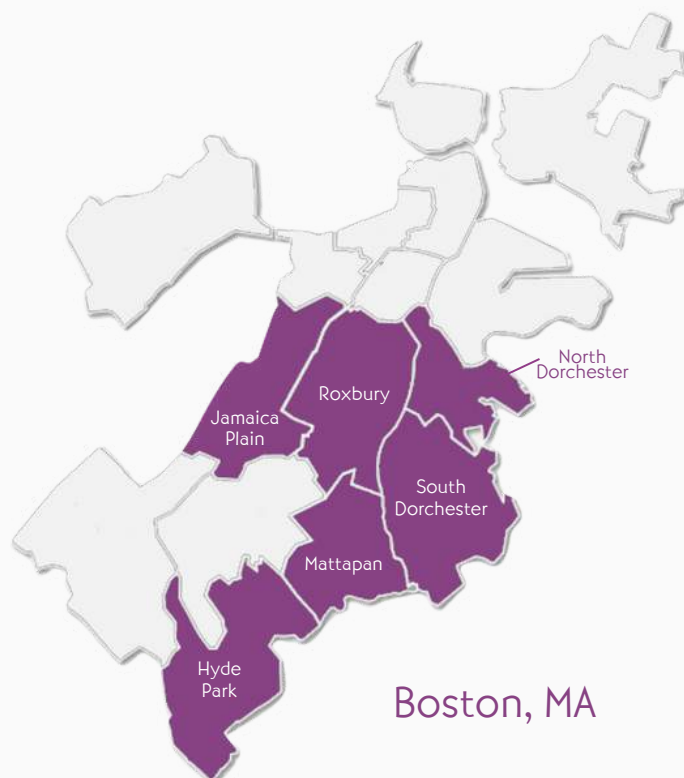
We serve individuals and families in Boston and surrounding areas, and share best practices with mothers and organizations nationwide.

Violence in our communities does not just impact direct victims. Our population is struggling with the impact of trauma due to community violence, homicide, domestic violence, and related issues. Grieving mothers, siblings, and families 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.

We serve Individuals & Families primarily in **Roxbury, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, & Hyde Park, Massachusetts**, who are: Facing racial inequities, endangered by community violence, unemployed or at risk for job loss, living in poverty, homeless or risk of homelessness, recent or undocumented immigrants, ESL

speakers, struggling with physical and mental health needs, young parents, opportunity youth, formerly Incarcerated community members (returning citizens).



3,600

Clients Served
Annually



Adult
Education



Youth
Development



Health &
Wellness

Agenda Day 1

Master of Ceremonies – Amanda Merricks

8:30am – 9:30am

Breakfast begins

Exhibit Hall Opens/Networking

9:30am – 10:00am

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Amanda Merricks – MC

Renée Omoladé – MJE Board Member (MA)

Monalisa Smith – President & CEO of MJE (MA)

10:00am – 10:30am

Keynote Speaker

DA Kevin Hayden (MA)

11:00am – 11:45am

Breakout Room Workshops:

Healing Begins with Me: Empowering Personal and Community Resilience

Dr. Janie Dowdy-Dandridge – Tennessee

Gamechangers United for Justice & Equality NFP (TN)

Marketing, Communication, and Event Planning for Non-Profits

Mel Powsner & Arielys Morales – Mothers for Justice and Equality (MA)

Youth, Health & Wellness

Arielle Romain & Shreya Sankar – Mothers for Justice and Equality (MA)

Prioritizing Community Partnerships and Engagement: A Crucial Approach to Empowering Communities of Color

Sherry Nolen – Saving Ourselves (IL)

11:45am – 12:30pm

Lunch

Exhibit Halls/Networking

12:45pm – 1:15pm

Keynote Speaker

Boston University President Dr. Melissa Gilliam (MA)

1:15pm – 1:25pm

BREAK

1:30pm – 1:40pm

Meet & Greet with Boston Mayor Michelle Wu

1:45pm – 2:30pm

Courage & Conviction Awards

Presented by Monalisa Smith, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, and Orlando Watkins – Vice President and Chief Program Officer of the Boston Foundation (MA)

2:45pm – 3:15pm

Fireside Chat with Awardees

Moderated by Julia Mejia – City Councilor (MA)

3:20pm – 3:30pm

Solve-It Talk – A Healing Journey through Grief and Loss

Robin David – President, The Golden Foundation (TN)

3:30pm – 3:40pm

Solve-It Talk – Anger Management

Lois Jones-Myles – Founder of There Is Always Hope at Safer Foundation (IL)

3:45pm – 4:15pm

Fireside Chat with Robin and Lois

Moderated by Ruthzee Louijeune – City Councilor At-Large Boston City Council President (MA)

4:20pm – 4:30pm

Closing Remarks

Amanda Merricks



"Attending the Mothers Against Violence conference taught me to be present, not just in the moment but to allow our voices to be heard; I remember, back then, I couldn't even complete a sentence. Not that the pain is any less, but by being present, Mothers For Justice and Equality gave me a voice for the voiceless to stand for my daughter and other families."

- Milagros and Rafael Burgos, Chicago, IL

Agenda Day 2

Master of Ceremonies – Amanda Merricks

8:30am – 9:30am

Breakfast begins

Exhibit Hall Opens/Networking

9:40am – 9:50am

Solve-It Talk – How Building Social Capital Can Be a Driving Force for Equity

Eric Leslie – Founder of Union Capital Boston (MA)

9:50am – 10:45am

Panel Discussion – Building Safe Communities through Economic Empowerment

Moderated by Nick Bates – Director, Howard Thurman Center for Common Ground at Boston University (MA)

10:45am – 11:30am

Planetary Workshop – Bereavement Blocks

Michelle Norris – Director of Public Relations and Co-founder of Corey's Network Inc. (MO)

11:30am – 12:30pm

Breakout Rooms

How to Employ AI-ChatGPT Resources for Writing and Publishing

Dr. Larry D. George, Ph.D. – CEO Dr. Larry George CDC, Inc., and George Educational Consulting Services, Inc. (NC)

Panel Discussion – Finding Your Voice

Myra C. Smith – Neighborhood Services Advocate (CT)

Merryl Eaton – Director of Advocacy & Education, Christian Community Action (CT)

Holly Hackett – Mothers & Others for Justice (CT)

Grant Writing & Management 101 – The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly

Ruth Senchyna – Parents of Murdered Children (NY)

Mental Health and Multicultural Understanding

Nana Akomaa Kyerematen – Master's Clinician, Roxbury Multi-Service Center (MA)

12:30pm – 1:15pm

Lunch

1:15pm – 1:45pm

Remarks & Panel Discussion – Healing Begins with Me: Empowering Women to Action

Moderated by Dr. Janie Dowdy-Dandridge, D Min. (TN)

1:45pm – 2:00pm

Closing Remarks/Call to Action

Monalisa Smith – President & CEO of MJE (MA)



"Last year at the MAV Conference I was able to meet the mayor of Boston and receive her kind words of encouragement for the work we do. This year I'm looking forward to networking and bonding with more mothers who are doing this work. I'm excited about the knowledge I know I'm going to learn and be able to use it for more efficiency and sustainability. I'm honored to be going back this year with two amazing mothers that have been on this journey with me!"

- Paulette Smith, Atlanta, GA

Special Guest Speakers

Your Host



Monalisa Smith

Founder, President, CEO,
Mothers for Justice and Equality
Boston, MA



Michelle Wu

Mayor of Boston
Boston, MA



Nick Bates

Director of the Howard Thurman
Center at Boston University
Boston, MA



Orlando Watkins

Vice President and Chief
Program Officer of the Boston
Foundation
Boston, MA



Dr. Melissa L. Gilliam

Boston University President
Boston, MA



Kevin Hayden

Suffolk County District Attorney
Boston, MA



Dr. Larry D. George, Ph.D.,

CEO Dr. Larry George CDC, Inc.,
and George Educational
Consulting Services, Inc.
Mount Holly, NC



Merryl Eaton

Director of Advocacy &
Education, Christian
Community Action
Hamden, CT



Michelle Norris

Director of Public Relations and
Co-founder of Corey's Network
Inc.
Kansas City, MO



**Rev. Dr. Janie Dowdy-
Dandridge, D Min.**

Tennessee Gamechangers
United for Justice and Equality
Paris, TN

Solve-It Talks & Fireside Chat

Moderator



Ruthzee Louijeune

City Councilor At-Large
Boston City Council
President
Boston, MA



Robin F. David

Nashville, TN
Solve-It Talk: Sacred Balance:
Embracing Self-Care for
Healing and Wholeness



Lois Jones-Myles

Chicago, IL
Solve-It Talk:
Anger Management



Kewane L. Jones

Chicago, IL
Solve-It Talk:
Anger Management



Lekesha Jones-Black

Chicago, IL
Solve-It Talk:
Anger Management



Eric Leslie

Cambridge, MA
Solve-It Talk:
How Building Social Capital
Can Be a Driving Force for
Equity

Panelists



Holly Hackett
Mothers & Others for
Justice
Branford, CT



Ruth Rollins
President and Founder of We
Are Better Together Warren
Daniel Hairston Project
Boston, MA



Zanetia Henry
Operation Recovery Inc.
Marietta, GA



Zeneta B. Everhart
Council Woman
City of Buffalo Common
Council, Masten District
Buffalo, NY



**The Reverend John
Dandridge**
Tennessee Gamechangers
United for Justice &
Equality NFP
Paris, TN



Donald M. Osgood Sr.
Program Director, Boston
Public Health Community
Healing Response Network
Boston, MA



Jay Vilar
Boston Director
The Fountain Fund
Boston, MA



Reverend Mark V. Scott
Boston Public Health
Commission
Division of Violence
Prevention
Director
Boston, MA



Merryl Eaton
Director of Advocacy &
Education, Christian
Community Action
Hamden, CT



Myra C. Smith
Neighborhood Services
Advocate (NSA)
New Haven, CT



Tekesia Shields
Founder of Mother's
Against Gang Violence/
Credible Messenger of Ga.
Family Engagement
Specialist
Atlanta, GA

Workshop Facilitators



Rev. Dr. Janie Dowdy-Dandridge, D Min.

Paris, TN

Workshop: Healing Begins with Me



Dr. Larry D. George, Ph.D.,
Mount Holly, NC

Workshop: How to Employ AI-ChatGPT Resources for Writing and Publishing



Nana Akomaa Kyerematen

Boston, MA

Workshop: Mental Health and Multicultural Understanding



Sherry Nolan

Chicago, IL

Workshop: Community Engagement



Arielys Morales

Boston, MA

Workshop: Marketing, Communication, and Event Planning for Non-Profits



Mel Powsner

Boston, MA

Workshop: Marketing, Communication, and Event Planning for Non-Profits



Arielle Romain

Boston, MA

Workshop: Youth Health & Wellness - Healing through the Arts



Shreya Sankar

Boston, MA

Workshop: Youth Health & Wellness - Healing through the Arts



Michelle Norris

Kansas City, MO

Workshop: Bereavement Blocks



Ruth Senchyna

Albany, NY

Workshop: Grant Writing & Management 101 - The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly

2024 Courage & Conviction Award Winners



Sherry Nolan

Founder of Saving Ourselves
Chicago, IL

Sherry Nolan is the CEO and founder of Saving Ourselves, an advocacy organization dedicated to addressing gun violence and supporting families affected by it. Motivated by the tragic loss of her son Akaeem Nolan, who was killed on July 7, 2021, Sherry has become a powerful voice in the fight against gun violence in Jackson, Mississippi, and beyond. Through Saving Ourselves, she provides resources, support, and a sense of community to those who have experienced similar tragedies, striving to create safer neighborhoods and lasting change.

Annette Brown is a Staten Island, New York native and a devoted mother of four. In 2014, her life changed forever when her son, Wayne Lamar Best, was tragically murdered in Schenectady, New York. Out of her pain, Annette became a beacon of hope, founding *Let's Talk with Annette* in 2019, an online forum for people facing personal hardships and dark times. In 2024, Annette founded Parent of Angel Children Inc., a nonprofit based in Albany, New York, which supports grieving parents through weekly support groups, quarterly events, and annual retreats. The organization has extended its reach beyond the U.S., including members from Canada. She is committed to organizations focused on community care, with her mission being to provide peace and comfort to those who have lost a child. Annette's motto is: "If we had more love, we would have less violence."



Annette Brown-Morris

Parents Of Angel Children
Albany, NY



Michelle Norris

Director of Public Relations and Co-founder of Corey's Network Inc.
Kansas City, MO

Michelle R. Norris has been in the fields of Social Work and Education for 35 years. She has worked with abused and battered women, adjudicated youth, non-traditional students in a post-secondary educational setting, and urban core youth. She holds a Master's in Organizational Development Psychology, and her experience in Social Services gives her a specific skill set for developing a strong Board of Directors for a nonprofit program. Her MA in Management is focused on fundraising. Michelle is a 2017 recipient of the Woman of Distinction Award, the House of Representatives "Glory of Missouri" award, the Kindest Kansas Citian award, and is a published author. She is also a member of the National Association of Professional Women, the National Professional Honor Society, and Nonprofit Connect.

On May 5, 2014, a devastating tragedy hit home for Carolyn, a mother of three sons whom she loves dearly and cared for selflessly. Carolyn's son, Darrell Lynch, was shot in front of her over a parking incident and took his last breath in her arms in South Jamaica, Queens. Carolyn's life was forever changed. Not knowing how she would continue to live without her son, Carolyn recalls asking her mother, "Where do we go from here?" Her mother's response was, "LIVE." Carolyn's career shifted from being a Substance Abuse Counselor to becoming a Life Camp Inc. employee, where she comforts other families affected by gun violence, helping them live their "new life" without their loved ones. Through the education Carolyn received while working at Life Camp Inc., she was blessed to attend The New School, where she found herself. Carolyn began to understand the meaning of being traumatized, suffering from dehumanizing loss, and what the grieving process looked like. This was what she needed to bring back to survivors in her community. In 2018, Carolyn started her own 501(c)(3) nonprofit, "Where Do We Go From Here Inc.," aimed at improving the mental health of families affected by gun violence and helping them transition from being stuck in their grieving process.



Carolyn Dixon
Where Do We Go
From Here Inc
Jamaica, NY



Zanetia Henry
Operation Recovery Inc.
Marietta, GA

Zanetia Henry is a native of Waynesboro, Mississippi, now residing in Marietta, Georgia. She is a beacon of light and an example of hope to all who desire to overcome the darkness of grief. Zanetia is the Chief Executive Officer of Operation Recovery Inc., Woodson Center Voices of Black Mothers United State Lead & Violence Prevention Coordinator, a Department of Justice Certified Victims' Advocate, a Grief Hope Coach, a 25+ year licensed educator, a Trauma-Informed Responder, a Mental Health First Aid Responder, and a Motivational Speaker. Of all her titles, the two most cherished are Gee Gee and Ma, a testament to the deep love and significance of family in her life. Blessed with two beautiful children and three amazing grandchildren, Zanetia can hold her daughter and grandchildren in her arms, but there is a void in her heart left by her unforgettable 22-year-old son, DreCharles Henry. Zanetia transformed her pain into a powerful purpose, dedicating herself to supporting grieving parents, advocating for crime victims, fostering community unity, and working towards ending violence. In her own words, Zanetia reflects on her journey, stating, "I didn't choose this journey; this journey chose me. However, I can choose how I travel. I choose to travel hand and heart with others who have been ChoZen, while serving along the way." Zanetia Henry's story is one of resilience, purpose, and a commitment to making a positive impact in the lives of others.

Fireside Chat with Awardees

Moderator



Julia Mejia
Boston City Councilor, At-Large
Boston, MA

Workshops

Mental Health and Multicultural Understanding

Facilitator: Nana Akomaa Kyerematen
Master's Clinician,
Roxbury Multi-Service Center
Boston, MA

This workshop discusses the multicultural perspective of mental illness, which fills the need for specific and beneficial aspects of multicultural counseling. Mental illness is not one-size-fits-all. A person's culture, which includes their race, ethnic tribe, values, and life experiences, molds their view and management of mental illness in a significant way. For example, the trauma from the vestiges of slavery, Jim Crow and segregation (Lindsey, 2015), and countless other traumas continue to take their toll on an individual's emotional well-being and psychological stability. The workshop examines the shared value systems among the African, Asian, Haitian, and Hispanic immigrants and the African American and Native American sub-cultures. We will discuss specific differences among them and appropriate methods of approach for effective therapeutic treatment.

Grant Writing & Management 101 - The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly

Facilitator: Ruth Senchyna
Parents of Murdered Children
Albany, NY

A basic introductory overview of grant writing and management for the beginner. Topics will include:

- Where does the money come from? Government vs. foundation grants
- Components of a good grant proposal
- Goals, Objectives, Indicators, Outcomes, Log Frames, Theories of Change, and all that jazz
- You got the money - now what?

How to Employ AI-ChatGPT Resources for Writing and Publishing

Facilitator: Dr. Larry D. George, Ph.D.,
CEO Dr. Larry George CDC, Inc., and George
Educational Consulting Services, Inc.
Mount Holly, NC

This workshop will introduce and demonstrate AI ChatGPT resources for writing and publishing works for government and academic purposes (grants, fundraising, etc.).

Bereavement Blocks

Facilitator: Michelle Norris
Director of Public Relations and Co-founder of
Corey's Network Inc.
Kansas City, MO

The "Bereavement Blocks" seminar is an interactive activity using color-coded Jenga-style blocks to represent the stages of grief. Participants roll a dice, remove the corresponding block, and discuss how that stage manifests in their experiences. The randomness of the dice symbolizes the unpredictability of grief, while the growing tower represents how emotions are intertwined. As the tower inevitably collapses, it prompts reflection on how to rebuild after grief overwhelms. This exercise has been well-received by clients and is designed to help both professionals and victims of homicide understand and cope with grief.



Youth Health & Wellness - Healing through the Arts

Facilitators: Arielle Romain, Director of Health Equity & Shreya Sankar, Family Advocate
Mothers for Justice and Equality
Boston, MA

Youth Health & Wellness - Healing through the Arts: allows participants to explore a variety of materials and techniques to create and reflect during the recovery journey while they develop skills to help feel grounded during the process of healing.

Prioritizing Community Partnerships and Engagement: A Crucial Approach to Empowering Communities of Color"

Facilitator: Sherry Nolan
Founder of Saving Ourselves
Chicago, IL

This workshop will explore the importance of building strong, collaborative relationships with local organizations and community members to address the unique challenges faced by communities of color. Participants will learn strategies for effective engagement, how to foster trust and mutual respect, and the role of culturally responsive practices in creating impactful partnerships. Through interactive discussions and case studies, we will highlight how prioritizing these connections can lead to more sustainable, community-driven solutions that empower and uplift marginalized communities.

Marketing, Communication, and Event Planning for Non-Profits

Facilitators: Arielys Morales, Event Coordinator & Mel Powsner, Marketing Communications Manager
Mothers for Justice and Equality
Boston, MA

In the world of non-profit organizations, marketing and event planning are not just separate tasks—they are powerful tools that, when combined, significantly amplify your impact and outreach. Understanding how to seamlessly integrate marketing efforts with event planning ensures that every event you host not only raises awareness, but furthers your organization's goals. In this workshop, you'll learn how to leverage events as a marketing tool, drive engagement, and create lasting relationships with donors, volunteers, and the community.

Healing Begins with Me: Embracing Inner Strength - A Journey of Personal Healing and Transformation

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Janie Dowdy-Dandridge, D Min. - Tennessee Gamechangers
United for Justice and Equality
Paris, TN

Embark on a transformative journey with "Healing Begins with Me: Embracing Inner Strength - A Journey of Personal Healing and Transformation." This workshop empowers individuals to take charge of their healing processes by tapping into their inner resilience and strength. Through interactive activities, reflective exercises, and guided discussions, participants will explore various dimensions of personal well-being, including emotional, mental, and spiritual health. Whether you're overcoming past traumas, managing stress, or seeking personal growth, this workshop provides the tools and support needed to foster meaningful and lasting change. Healing is not a destination, but a journey; it all begins with you.



Survivor Stories

Milagros & Rafael Burgos, Chicago, IL

It has been almost 10 years since I was first introduced to Mothers for Justice and Equality. That is how long ago my daughter's life was taken; on October 19, 2014, someone shot blindly and didn't even realize whose life was taken away from Alexandria's family, friends, and society. As you see, I'm carrying my daughter's poster, which I carried on the whole trip here from Chicago to Boston; I said to myself since she wasn't here in person, she would be here spiritually, and people would know the precious life that has been taken from gun violence unfortunately like so many.

Attending the Mothers Against Violence Conference taught me to be present, not just in the moment but to allow our voices to be heard; I remember, back then, I couldn't even complete a sentence. Not that the pain is any less, but by being present, Mothers For Justice and Equality gave me a voice for the voiceless to stand for my daughter and other families. My husband and I would go to Washington, D.C. with the inspiration and motivation, I became that mom who wouldn't stop!! I would come back home with a vision to help others and to let families know that our pain and voice are meaningful and that they are not alone. People needed to know that gun violence is not normal, and every time I would come back, each time was for a purpose. I knew it wouldn't bring my daughter back. However, many lives were taken senselessly, and I couldn't sit back.

Thank you to Mothers for Justice and Equality, who helped give me that strength, motivation, and inspiration. My husband, who attends as well, said he felt accepted, and he thanks Mothers for Justice and Equality for giving him a voice. Dads go through their own pain, but he was able to express and be a voice. There is so much to express and talk about, but one day, I will write a book.

To receive the award last year, to know that the vision, the foundation we dedicated to our daughter, and all lives affected by gun violence, and violence in general, Imani Dream Angel, does have a purpose and us as a community and a village are taking action, makes our heart filled with love. From pain to purpose, struggles to strength, si se puede, which means "Yes we can!"

What an honor to have met such inspirational women. Mothers for Justice and Equality is an organization that helps people from different ethnicities, cities, and backgrounds. No matter where we grew up, we are all one in solitary; we are not treated any differently. We are all one!! Thank you, Thank you!

Sincerely,
Millie & Rafael Burgos





Kewane Jones, Chicago, IL

How I turned my Pain into purpose!

First Off, I was Shot 17 times and was unalive, but Through the Grace of God and his Mercy I am alive and I survived.

I Attend trauma Events and Speak and Tell my Story. I went to Salvation Army's with **Sherry Campbell Nolen** to tell my Story, News Stations, police Stations, Anger Management Classes with my Mother **Lois Jones-Myles**, Churches and Speak and tell my Testimony. I go to party's and tell all about my Deliverance and healing.



I tell everyone what happened to me and that God is Real. You may have heard all the Stories in The Bibles and Some may seem so unbelievable but when I tell my Story and me being here in the Flesh, people will then understand how God Works.

Now they believe me, Now they know He is Real. God Gave me a purpose, God Gave me a reason to live.

When I was in-between I felt him, I heard his Voice, I recognized that it was him and I was brought back from that Dark place, That was in-between, That sink Hole that was turning like a whirlwind pool underneath me, I felt God Lift me up and brought me back to the Light.

After He had asked me do I believe, and I fell to my knees and said Yessssss, Yessss, I believe and He Said to me, Whosoever believe in me shall have everlasting life.

.....And I woke up out that Coma for 5 long days. It felt like I was dreaming, but I heard Familiar voices and unfamiliar voices. And when I finally open my eyes my Family was all there all around me. The first words that I spoke was Of The Words the Lord had said to me!!!

Do y'all Believe God is Real, and They said Yessssssss, you were Shot 17 times and Flat line two times, and had Two blood Transfusions, your Lower Extremities, Upper Extremities, Your Abdomen, your Right Torso, All was Shot and I had over 22 surgeries.

My Dominant Right arm had to be rebuild with Titanium hardware. I still have a bullet 1.5 cm near my spine, I just had a bullet removed from my left behind after 5 years since this Happened on July 13, 2019.

So I tell my Story, and I will share my Testimony to anyone that wants to listen. This is my purpose, and I will not be ashamed. I am A walking miracle and a living Testimony.



Conference Participants

Host



Monalisa Smith

Founder, President, CEO,
Mothers for Justice
and Equality
Boston, MA

Monalisa founded Mothers for Justice and Equality (MJE) following the loss of her nephew to neighborhood violence. She gathered fellow mothers, many of whom were also suffering the loss of a child to violence, to share their concerns about the gross amount of violence against children within their neighborhoods. With the goal to educate and empower like-minded individuals and families, Monalisa founded the nonprofit in 2010. She continues to advocate for those struggling and strives to create new programs to help further the cause of ending neighborhood violence and keeping our streets safe.

Master of Ceremonies



Amanda Merricks

Boston, MA

Amanda Merricks is a lifelong Boston, MA, resident and has been heavily involved in the community for the past 30 years. She is the Chair of The Federal Special Emphasis Program Coalition and a Life Member of Blacks In Government Greater Boston Chapter, serving as the 2nd Executive Vice President, Membership Chair, and Health and Wellness Coordinator for Region 1. She is also one of the producers/partners for the Stand Up Comedy Series, producing comedy shows throughout New England and worldwide. Amanda has been the Master of Ceremony for the Franklin Park Coalition 5K Turkey Trot since 2017. Amanda's strong religious beliefs moved her to become involved in various church programs, and she has made it her personal goal to distribute gloves, hats, and blankets to the homeless.



Michelle Wu

Mayor of Boston
Boston, MA

Michelle Wu is the Mayor of Boston. She is a daughter of immigrants, Boston Public Schools mom to two boys, MBTA commuter, and fierce believer that we can solve our deepest challenges through building community. As Mayor, Michelle is working in coalition to deliver bold, systemic change and make Boston a city for everyone. Mayor Wu has been a voice for accessibility, transparency, and community engagement in city leadership. First elected to the Boston City Council in November 2013 at the age of 28, Wu is the first Asian-American woman to serve on the Council. In January 2016, she was elected President of the City Council by her colleagues in a unanimous vote, becoming the first woman of color to serve as Council President.

A national leader in faculty recruitment and student success and a champion of diversity and inclusion, Gilliam is also a professor of obstetrics and gynecology and of pediatrics whose scholarship focuses on developing interventions to promote adolescent health and well-being. Beyond her background in science and medicine, Gilliam, who studied English literature at Yale and got her Master of Arts in philosophy and politics from University of Oxford, says she was raised to embrace the societal importance of arts and culture. Her late father was a pioneering abstract painter who was known for a career of continuous experimentation and innovation, and her mother was a trailblazing journalist and the first Black female reporter hired by the Washington Post. Her parents instilled in her an intellectual curiosity and a firm belief in the importance of civic engagement and public service.

Born and raised in Chicago, Nick attended Southern Illinois University Carbondale, where he received a bachelor's degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice and a Master's in Higher Education. Nick comes to BU with both teaching experience in gender and sexuality studies, along with Residence Life experience. He has a vested interest in working with people to develop programs and strategies to reshape socialized perceptions of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality while fostering an environment for healthy identity development. Nick provides oversight over the operations and content of the HTC. Nick has committed himself to thoroughly reading Thurman and finding ways to help members of the community develop a relationship with the work of Howard and Sue Bailey Thurman.

District Attorney Kevin R. Hayden has dedicated his professional life to serving the public, seeking justice, and keeping communities safe and vibrant. DA Hayden began his career right here in the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office. He served as an assistant district attorney for over a decade across various units and was Chief of the Safe Neighborhood Initiative, a nationally recognized community-based crime prevention program. DA Hayden was one of the earliest advocates and practitioners of diversion, intervention and alternative to prosecution programs. He worked with local, state, and federal partners on violence prevention programs and initiatives for at-risk youth, services for victims and witnesses, and assistance for citizens returning from incarceration. DA Hayden also served on the Gang Unit, the Homicide Response Team, and the Juvenile Unit.



Dr. Melissa Gilliam
President of BU
Boston, MA



Nick Bates
Director, Howard
Thurman Center for
Common Ground at BU
Boston, MA



Kevin Hayden
District Attorney
Boston, MA



Ruthzee Louijeune
City Councilor At-Large
Boston City Council
President
Boston, MA

Ruthzee Louijeune, serving her second term as City Councilor At-Large and unanimously elected as Boston City Council President, is a grounded, thoughtful, and inclusive leader. A dedicated public servant, Ruthzee is committed to fostering shared prosperity in Boston with a focus on justice and equity. Born and raised in Mattapan and Hyde Park to working-class Haitian immigrants, Ruthzee's journey is deeply rooted in the fabric of Boston.



Julia Mejia
Boston City Councilor,
At-Large
Boston, MA

Born in the Dominican Republic, City Councilor At-Large, Julia Mejia arrived in the neighborhood of Dorchester when she was 5 years old. Raised by a single mother who was undocumented for most of her childhood, she was forced at an early age to speak up on behalf of her mother and others who felt ignored by the very institutions that were supposed to serve them.



Rev. Dr. Janie Dowdy-Dandridge, D Min.
Tennessee
Gamechangers
United for Justice and
Equality
Paris, TN

Rev. Dr. Janie Dowdy-Dandridge, D.Min., is a high-energy Narrative Leadership Coach, Certified Professional Chaplain, author, educator, and conference leader. Drawing upon over 35 years of pastoral leadership, Dr. Janie Dowdy-Dandridge's ministry style is bold, transparent, authentic, anointed, and liberating. She is the Executive Director of the nonprofit Tennessee Game Changers United for Justice and Equality and the proud pastor of Brown Chapel AME Church in Union City, TN. Additionally, Dr. Dowdy-Dandridge is a proud member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., the American Counseling Association, the Tennessee Association of Pastoral Therapists, and is a pre-licensed Clinical Pastoral Therapist. She is happily married to Rev. Dr. John Dandridge, and together they have six children, seven grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Dr. Larry D. George, Ph.D., is a distinguished academic, author, publisher, and entrepreneur with a robust background in engineering and biblical scholarship. With over twenty-five years of experience in graduate teaching, Dr. George has imparted knowledge in the fields of the New Testament, the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible), and broader theological and religious studies. His deep expertise and commitment to education have led him to his current roles as the President and CEO of George Educational Consulting Services, Inc., and Dr. Larry George CDC, Inc. (website: <https://dr-larry-george-cdc-inc.ueniweb.com/>) In his capacity as CEO and President, Dr. George is dedicated to fostering academic and business excellence through the development of effective and efficient educational processes. His consulting services are centered on enhancing academic frameworks to achieve optimal outcomes for institutions and businesses alike. Dr. George resides in Mount Holly, North Carolina, where he continues to contribute to the academic and religious communities with his extensive knowledge and leadership in education.

Nana Akomaa Kyerematen has extensive experience in psychiatric clinical evaluation and social services for children and families. She is deeply committed to diversity and cultural competence, operating workshops on multicultural understanding and mental health while actively applying the Cultural Competence Continuum concept. Her career spans over twenty years with NAMI, advocating for a quality life for individuals living with mental illness and their families. Originally born and raised in Ghana, West Africa, Nana worked extensively with the Lost Boys refugees in the 2000s and has researched Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and its cultural impacts. While her vocation is clinically oriented, she has authored essays and letters on the importance of culturally competent education and African history. She highlights the longstanding needs of marginalized communities, culminating in the publication of her first book. Nana Akomaa Kyerematen received her Bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, CA. She then pursued her graduate studies at Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts, where she earned a Master of Science degree in Public Health and Counseling.

My nephew Camilo was taken by gun violence in 2014, and I became a GVP advocate soon after. I have been affiliated with many organizations over this past decade, including Moms Demand Action/Everytown Survivor Network; Newtown Action Alliance; Crime Survivors For Safety and Justice; and most recently, Parents of Angel Children. My hope is to make a positive contribution towards reducing violence and supporting survivors in whatever way that I can.



**Dr. Larry D. George,
Ph.D.,**
CEO Dr. Larry George
CDC, Inc., and George
Educational Consulting
Services, Inc.
Mount Holly, NC



**Nana Akomaa
Kyerematen**
Master's Clinician,
Roxbury Multi-Service
Center
Boston, MA



Ruth Senchyna
Parents of Murdered
Children
Albany, NY



Arielys Morales
Event Coordinator
Mothers for Justice and
Equality
Boston, MA

Arielys Morales is the Event Coordinator at Mothers for Justice and Equality, where she specializes in creating impactful events that drive community engagement and advocacy. With a background as a single mother, and survivor. Arielys brings a unique perspective to her work. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Human Services from Northeastern University and has extensive experience in both domestic and international community service. In her workshop, Arielys will share strategies for effective event coordination in the non-profit sector to foster meaningful connections and support.



Mel Powsner
Marketing
Communications Manager
Mothers for Justice and
Equality
Boston, MA

Mel is MJE's Marketing & Communications Manager who works closely with all MJE community members. She is a storyteller with strong writing, photography, website management, design, and social media marketing skills. Mel's life-long curiosity about the stories of individuals led her to pursue a career in helping others through content creation. She finds beauty and importance in documenting those stories to establish community connections. She received her BFA in Photography & Video from Montserrat College of Art, with a focus on documenting the stories of LGBTQ+, disabled, and homeless populations. With years of experience working with people of all ages and demographics, Mel has found equilibrium in sharing the stories of marginalized communities in need of a strong voice.



Arielle Romain
Director of Health Equity
Mothers for Justice and
Equality
Boston, MA

Arielle oversees the Health Equity and Community Wellness Program, which helps single mothers who are survivors of trauma transition from instability to stability. She comes from a lineage of strong women who tackle every hardship head-on, which inspired her to join MJE's team. Arielle truly understands what it takes to be an advocate for her community. She's worked at multiple community organizations, which pushes her to work hard and support her team to provide efficient and effective support to MJE community members. Arielle understands that communal support stabilizes communities, something she has always felt is essential for improving the areas she serves.

Shreya is a recent graduate of Northeastern University with a Bachelor's degree in Behavioral Neuroscience. Aspiring to attend medical school, Shreya is passionate about the health and wellness of her community and has extensive volunteer experience at local neighborhood health clinics and schools. Shreya is dedicated to serving her clients with empathy and is driven to uplift individuals and families by providing compassionate care.



Shreya Sankar
Behavioral Health
Specialist/Family Advocate
Mothers for Justice and
Equality
Boston, MA

Ruth Rollins is the President and Founder of the We Are Better Together Warren Daniel Hairston Project, an organization that connects women and girls affected by homicide and incarceration to disrupt cycles of violence. Inspired by the tragic loss of her son, Warren, in 2007, Ruth co-founded Operation LIPSTICK to address gun trafficking and later established We Are Better Together in 2017 to provide support and education for families impacted by gun violence. Recognizing the shared trauma of families on both sides of violence, she has created a safe space for healing and advocacy. Ruth's exceptional community service has earned her numerous accolades, including the 2024 Boston Women's Fund Award and the 2023 ABCD Community Hero Award. A skilled facilitator and compassionate leader, Ruth is a respected voice in the fight for peace and justice, dedicated to transforming lives and breaking cycles of violence.



Ruth Rollins
President and Founder of
We Are Better Together
Warren Daniel Hairston
Project
Boston, MA

Holly believes everyone has the right to life, liberty, and personal security. As well as housing, healthcare, and food/nutrition are human rights. Holly is a member of Mothers and Others for Justice (MOFJ) and the Co-Chair of MOFJs HEALTH (Helping Everyone Achieve Lifelong Trusted Healthcare) Committee. Holly is the Advocacy and Education Project Program Associate at Christian Community Action in New Haven, CT. She was considered for this position because of her commitment to MOFJ and HEALTH. Her passion is to change the broken systems in cities, states, and our country to achieve justice and equity for ALL. This can only happen when we change policies starting with grassroots advocacy. Through her professional life and lived expertise working with legislators in CT, she has learned that people most impacted by these policies must have their voices heard.



Holly Hackett
Mothers & Others for
Justice
Branford, CT



Lois Jones-Myles
Founder of There Is
Always @ Safer
Foundation
Chicago, IL

Lois Jones-Myles, was born and reared in Mississippi and currently resides in Chicago is the Founder of There Is Always Hope @ Safer Foundation and a Supportive Services Specialist who has been assisting clients over 23 years with issues or barriers that would prevent them from employment. Lois holds a Master of Science and Bachelor of Science in Corrections/Criminal Justice from Chicago State University. Lois is a Certified Anger Management Specialist II (Fellow Member of NAMA National Anger Management Association), Recovery Coach, Financial Coach, Member of IACJ (Illinois Association for Criminal Justice), Advanced Clinical Trainer, Department of Children and Family Services Mandated Reporter, Certified National Institute of Health, State Of IL Teacher License (K-12), Certified Deputy Registrar for Board of Elections, Domestic Violence Counselor, Board Of Director Striving for Justice Ministries, Adult Mental Health First Aid USA, and a member of Mothers For Justice & Equality. Lois received the MJE Courage and Conviction Award in 2023. Lois is recently widowed, surviving her late husband Randy, and has three children , Lekesha, Kewane, and Guss Jr. , twelve (12) grandchildren and eleven (11) great grandchildren.



Kewane L. Jones
Chicago, IL

I reside in Chicago, IL born and Raised. I had a Typical Childhood, Very Active, I was on The Gymnastics Team, Aerobic Classes, African Dances, I was very Athletic. I enjoyed swimming a lot, I was so outgoing and very independent at a very young age. I am the Middle child of two siblings. I graduated and attended College, Criminal Justice was my Major. I then began to start a Family of my own. I have Four Children and Two Grandchildren. I have Done a lot of work in Customer Services and as well as Retail work. I started my own make-up line and Candy Store. I then became an Election Judge for the City of Chicago Board of Elections. I am also an Evangelist at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Chicago, IL. I Love writing Poetry I am in The book called "Today's Famous Poems on the Wing of Pegasus." I have a Movie on Tubi called "Survive 'N' Chicago." My Son Gregory Bennett 3rd is the Producer, Writer, Editor and Author. I love Cooking, and being a Mother to my children, and Grandchildren. I enjoy hosting many events and being an advocate and Activist in my Community as well. Sadly I was Shot 17 times on July 13, 2019 over a parking Space in my once lived Neighborhood. I seeked Justice for over three years before they apprehended The Gun man March 8, 2022 and Convicted him on August 15, 2023. I know I am Grateful to still be alive. I know I am Blessed, it was nothing But God who Delivered me from Evil. Sometimes it just feel surreal that I am An African American Woman who Survived being Shot 17 times from a man who had disregards for Human life. What I say is I Am that Statistic. It's Easy To Die, But hard to Live. I am no Longer The Victim, I am Victorious!!!

Lekesha Jones-Black currently resides in Chicago, IL, a Catering Director at Chicago State University, one year breast cancer survivor, and a mother whose son was a victim of gun violence and also a survivor. My family is my passion. My personal interests are: volunteering, traveling, planning, decorating, family/gatherings, mediating and reading.



Lekesha Jones-Black
Chicago, IL

Jay Vilar is the Boston Site Director for The Fountain Fund. He is a seasoned professional dedicated to advancing racial and social justice through community empowerment and program development. With over two decades of experience in leadership roles, Jay brings a wealth of expertise in strategic planning, stakeholder management, and team leadership. Having served as Program Director at Haley House in Boston, Jay successfully led initiatives that positively impacted the lives of returning citizens, providing them with resources, employment opportunities, and community support. Jay's passion for equity advocacy stems from his personal experiences, including growing up with family members who are returning citizens. Jay has a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from George Mason University and certifications in event management, marketing, and nonprofit leadership from Tufts University.



Jay Vilar
Boston Director
The Fountain Fund
Boston, MA

Rev. Dr. John Dandridge, D.Min., is an ordained elder in the AME Church with over 47 years of ministry experience in AME and COGIC. He serves as the Senior Pastor of Quinn Chapel AME Church in Paris, TN, and is a dedicated leader focused on preaching, teaching, and mentoring. Beyond his pastoral work, Dr. Dandridge is a committed advocate for justice and equality, co-founding Tennessee Game Changers United 4 Justice and Equality. He holds multiple degrees and certifications in theology, mental health, and leadership, alongside a distinguished 22-year military career as a Special Forces officer. A PTSD survivor and author, Dr. Dandridge also hosts the "Come and Dine" broadcast and leads the Dandridge Institute of Theological Studies. Supported by his wife, Dr. Janie Dowdy-Dandridge, he is a devoted family man with a passion for faith, service, and advocacy in the face of personal challenges and loss.



The Reverend John Dandridge
Tennessee Gamechangers
United for Justice &
Equality NFP
Paris, TN



Merryl Eaton
Director of Advocacy &
Education, Christian
Community Action
Hamden, CT

Merryl Eaton is the Director of Advocacy and Education for Christian Community Action in New Haven. She has over thirty years of experience as a community organizer, engaging people of color to advocate for system changes in public policy. She provides leadership, technical assistance, and project management to Mothers and Others for Justice, a grassroots advocacy group. Key areas of interest include Connecticut's lack of affordable housing, healthcare reform, and voter turnout. Merryl's passions are organizing the state-wide legislative campaign to eliminate the "benefit cliff," which happens when a rise in household income results in a disproportionate reduction in household income, and building power in New Haven to fight for housing justice. She is a proud Parent Leadership Training Institute facilitator and has helped more than 300 people become change agents in diverse communities throughout Connecticut.



Zeneta B. Everhart
Council Woman
City of Buffalo Common
Council, Masten District
Buffalo, NY

Zeneta B. Everhart is a Buffalo, New York native born and raised on the East Side of Buffalo. She holds an Associate's Degree and a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Upon graduation, she accepted a position with Spectrum News Buffalo, as a breaking news photographer, and eventually became a Producer. After six years of working in news and media, Zeneta made the career leap into politics, accepting a position with New York State Senator Tim Kennedy of the 63rd District. She served as his Director of Diversity & Inclusion. Following the 5/14 massacre that seriously injured her son Zaire Goodman, Zeneta testified before Congress about the need for stricter gun laws resulting in the passage of the Safer Communities Act. From this tragedy Zeneta & Zaire's Book Club was also born. They have collected more than twenty-thousand books that teach children about racism, diversity, and acceptance. In 2023 Zeneta ran for political office, winning the Democratic Primary and the general election to become the next City of Buffalo Common Council Woman for the Masten District, a seat that has not been held by a woman in more than 60 years. She is a Humanist who believes in the power of serving others through love and understanding



Robin F. David
President, The Golden
Foundation
Nashville, TN

Robin F. David is a bestselling author, speaker, coach, and the founder of The Golden Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women through self-care and spiritual guidance. With expertise in Leadership Development, Public Speaking, and Coaching, Robin is a trailblazer in teaching women about self-love and self-care, which she calls "Sacred Balance." She has developed a reputation as a healing and wholeness activator, helping women worldwide achieve balance and fulfillment in their lives.

Donald Maurice Osgood, Sr. was born in Boston Massachusetts, and raised in the South End of Boston. Donald currently works for the Boston Public Health Commission, Division of Violence Prevention. In his role as the Program Director for NTT Network, Donald guides the direction of the entire network with the goal of providing and connecting communities with tools and resources for healing. Donald also attended grade school in the Boston Public School system and studied Accounting at Bay State College in 1988. An avid learner with a thirst for knowledge and truth, Donald enrolled and graduated from the Berean School of The Bible through the Urban Bible Training Center of Assemblies of God in the year 2003 receiving a degree in Christian Theology. Donald was trained through Shell Corporations Management programs as well as Franklin Covey Management while working for a leading automotive service provider, Jiffy Lube owned by Shell Corps. During his tenure at Jiffy Lube, Donald led a team of highly trained automotive technicians and also managed several locations for Jiffy Lube from 2004 2012. The next phase in Donald's life began with the transition from Manager to a high risk career as a Street Safe Boston worker . Here Donald would work with the "Proven Risk" teens of Boston's streets who are the known cause of violence in the City. Donald has also worked for the City of Boston Trauma Response Team through BCYF. Donald also worked at the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute. In His Role as Survivor Support Coordinator Donald assisted families in the first 24 to 72 hours of a homicide. One sentence summarizes: "Servant of the people"

Eric Leslie is the founder and lead organizer of Union Capital (unioncapital.org). Originally from Cambridge, MA, Eric began his career as a community organizer in Baltimore and New York City with the Industrial Areas Foundation. Eric later joined Teach For America and taught in North Philadelphia, serving as principal of KIPP Philadelphia Charter School from 2008-2012. Eric returned home to attend the Mid-Career MPA program at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government in 2013 and founded Union Capital the following year. Founded in 2014, Union Capital's mission is to transform social capital into opportunity by rewarding community engagement. UC's innovative approach combines technology and relationship building to strengthen neighborhood networks, build social capital, and create new pathways of opportunity for individuals and community. He lives back in Cambridge again with his wife and 12- and 9-year-old daughters.



Donald M. Osgood Sr.
Program Director, Boston
Public Health Community
Healing Response
Network
Boston, MA



Eric Leslie
Lead Organizer of Union
Capital
Cambridge, MA



Tekesia Shields

Founder of Mother's
Against Gang Violence
/Credible Messenger of
Ga. Family Engagement
Specialist
Atlanta, GA

Tekesia is a mother of four wonderful sons and a grandmother of one. Ms. Shields worked for over 12 years as a case manager for the Center for Black Women's Wellness educating mothers on the importance of prenatal care and infant mortality prevention. And years of Violence Intervention/Prevention programs in Atlanta. Over the years Ms. Shields has encouraged not only her own sons but several families whose lives she touched daily. Tekesia Shields decided to start an organization called MAG (Mother's Against Gang Violence), due to her trails of raising her own son's. Ms. Shields received services and education that she felt a need to share with the community which may save lives of many youths of today. After receiving honors from Atlanta Public Board of Education Schools and Center for Black Women's Wellness, Tekesia Shields decided to walk in her destiny and plant seeds that will nourish the community. And she is now a Credible Messenger of Ga., Criminal Justice Graduate of Atlanta Area Technical College and 2023 Fellow graduate of CCI (Center for Civic Innovation). Ms. Shields conducts Family Engagement sessions every Monday and has done so for 8yrs educating families/community who have been impacted by gang and gun violence. We have worked with over 400 families in sessions, employed five community members and three of our returning youth from DJJ (Department of Juvenile Justice) has graduated from high school. Ms. Shields does all of this in hopes that when her son re-enters the community, he will be provided with resources that can help him adjust.



Myra C. Smith

Neighborhood Services
Advocate (NSA)
New Haven, CT

Myra Smith is a longtime resident of New Haven CT. She is the mother of 2 adult children, Christopher Burney who is a recent college grad and serves in the National Guard, and Mariah Burney a Junior at SCSU majoring in special Education. Myra currently works at Christian Community Action as the Neighborhood Services Advocate where she runs the food pantry, diaper bank and utility assistance programs. Myra is a longtime member of Mothers and Others For Justice and Room For All Coalition. She is also an advisory board member for The Change maker's Guaranteed Income Fund and was recently nominated as a Yale New Haven Hospital Health Equity Champion. Myra is known to be a powerful motivational speaker and social justice warrior.

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. A South End native, Dorchester resident, and Boston Latin School alumna, Renée earned a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with a double minor in Africana Studies and Gender & Women's Studies from Emmanuel College and is a candidate for her Master's in Public Policy at Northeastern University



Renée Omolade
Director of Boston
Community Hub Schools
Boston, MA

Mark Scott serves as the Director of the Division of Violence Prevention at the Boston Public Health Commission. Previously, he was the Program Director for the Community Healing Response Network and directed the Community Health Worker program at the Codman Square Health Center. He also served in the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives as Associate Director for Outreach. Additionally, Mark was the Director of Community Partnerships at Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, where he helped develop the nationwide Amachi initiative. "Amachi" is a Nigerian word from the Ibo people, translated to mean "who knows but what has brought us through this child." Rev. Scott is the President of the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence and serves as the Associate Pastor of the Azusa Christian Community, a Black Pentecostal church. He also serves as a chaplain at Boston Medical Center. Mark is married, with four children (who grew up with him and his wife in their home) and three grandchildren.



Reverend Mark V. Scott
Boston Public Health
Commission Division of
Violence Prevention
Director
Boston, MA

Orlando C. Watkins is Vice President and Chief Program Officer at the Boston Foundation, where he oversees a discretionary grants fund of roughly \$16 million and leads a Program Department staff of two dozen people who work across four interconnected areas - Nurturing Strong Beginnings, Building Economic Opportunity, Advancing Community Wealth, and Amplifying Community Leadership. Orlando started his career as a social entrepreneur in Atlanta, Ga where he co-founded FreeForm Academy, a private school for young children and served as founding Director of the NASA-funded Inspiring Careers in Engineering Mathematics and Science at Morehouse College. Orlando currently serves on several boards including Horizons for Homeless Children, Camp Harborview and MATCH Education.



Orlando Watkins
Vice President and
Chief Program Officer
of the Boston
Foundation
Boston, MA





Thank You!

Board Members

Monalisa Smith

Eileen Paterson

Amanda Merricks

Renée Qmōladé

William Rodriguez

Nana Akomaa Kyerematen

Dasha Webster-Homcil

Advisors

David Dolbashian

Reverend Hammond

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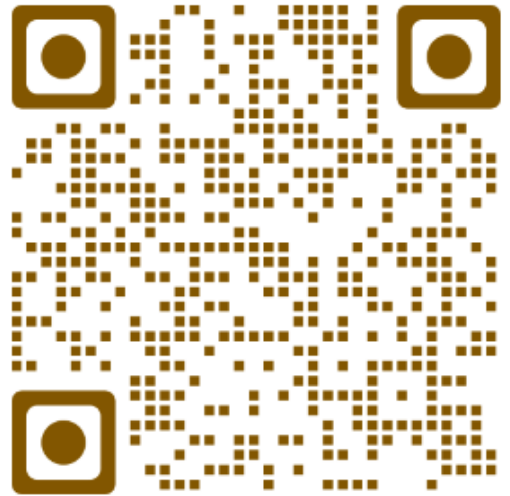
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www.mothersforjusticeandequality.org



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.

Contact Mothers for Justice and Equality



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2201 Washington St 3rd fl, Roxbury, MA 02119
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