

Bios

Featured Speakers



Benny Roberts, Executive Director of Hallie Q Brown Community Center, is an Executive Director dedicated to building strong relationships. He has a proven track record of initiating cultural changes and achieving organizational goals. Confident and skilled in public speaking, he is a creative and effective influencer with a deep passion for connecting with people and shaping organizational culture.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Mr. Roberts is also an accomplished artist. Growing up in the Twin Cities, he drew inspiration from various artistic influences, including visual art, theater, and music. He loves the creative process, which has allowed him to produce over 200 pieces of digital art, create more than 200 songs, develop a nationally award-winning public service announcement for the state of Minnesota, and design apparel and footwear. He has also participated in over 50 public speaking engagements. Check out his art at www.brobertscreates.com

Mr. Roberts embraces the journey of growth, healing, and rediscovery and has a genuine interest in learning about people and their cultures. He deeply values his family, stating, "I love my beautiful wife and adore my daughter; I prioritize family and loved ones above all else." (www.hallieqbrown.org)



Antoine Johnson, Fatherhood Practitioner, is a native of Buffalo, NY, and a proud husband and father of 2. Over the last several years, he has helped thousands of fathers and male caregivers across Western New York become the best versions of themselves for their children and families by addressing the emotional barriers caused by their fathers' absence.

He has helped raise over \$1 million in funding in his community around fatherhood. Antoine has found a "purpose for his pain," as he has his own experience with the disengagement of this father as a teen and lack of guidance into manhood, to being able to address the barriers that helped him heal his father wound and discover his purpose. Now, he promotes the need for men to be vulnerable and courageous about addressing their unresolved feelings toward their fathers so that they can grow and become effective men, partners, and caregivers.

Led by the phrase, "You can't conquer what you won't confront," Antoine is ready to help your group conquer the emotional pain from the past, increase self-awareness, and increase their effectiveness as a father. Invite Antoine to serve at your next conference, small group, or panel discussion.

(<https://www.bppn.org/programs/buffalo-fatherhood-initiative/>)

"History is not about the past. It's about the present!" Dr. El-Kati



Alysha Price is the CEO and founder of The Price Dynamic, a qualified neutral family mediator and trained motivational interviewer with a Bachelor's Degree in Human Services and Family Studies and a Master's in Management. Price is a North Minneapolis native who has dedicated over twenty years to eliminating education and health disparities in her community. Price is a 2019-2020 Finnovation Fellow, recipient of The Bank of America "Emerging Leaders" Program, and recipient of "The Minneapolis Award" for outstanding commitment to community.

As CEO & Founder, Price has a personal investment in improving communication within co-parenting families as she believes effective communication is the cornerstone to healing fractured family dynamics. Price, who was also raised in a co-parenting household and has built a successful co-parenting family of her own, comes to this topic with life experience and passion. Through her personal experiences, she brings raw empathy and an everything is achievable mindset, which resonates with the families served. Keeping a family whole across households can be challenging; therefore, Price sets out to raise awareness of the power that cooperative co-parenting can have on the development of our children. (<https://thepricedynamic.com/>)



St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter is the 46th and first African American mayor of the City of Saint Paul, Minnesota's Capital City. Fourth-generation Saint Paul resident, Mayor Carter, leads with an unapologetic equity agenda. Since taking office in 2018, his accomplishments include raising the city's minimum wage to \$15/hour; tripling the free program in rec centers; eliminating late fines in public libraries; reestablishing an Affordable Housing Trust Fund; expanding immigrant & refugee support resources; and launching an Office of Financial Empowerment. One signature initiative is CollegeBound Saint Paul, Mayor

Carter's plan to start every child born in the city with a \$50 College Savings Account, starting January 1, 2020.



Commissioner Garrison McMurtrey is the first Black man elected to a county board in the state of Minnesota. Before being elected, McMurtrey served as the district director for the office of U.S. Congresswoman Angie Craig. Before joining the Congresswoman's office, he worked on the public affairs team at Target Corporation. He plans to prioritize creating more deeply affordable housing, investing in economic development, and ensuring county services are responsive to the needs of residents.

Ramsey County Commissioner Garrison McMurtrey is the first Black man elected to a county board in the state of Minnesota. Originally from Mississippi, McMurtrey moved to Minnesota to pursue a career in public policy and community engagement.

Before being elected, McMurtrey served as the district director for the office of U.S. Congresswoman Angie Craig. Before joining the Congresswoman's office, he worked on the public affairs team at Target Corporation. He was previously an outreach director for U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, where he led community engagement efforts in areas including business, workforce development, communities of color, and consumer protection.

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Outside of work, McMurtrey has previously served as Chair of the St. Paul DFL and commissioner on the St. Paul Planning and Charter Commissions. He has a B.A. in political science and communication from Ripon College and a M.A. in public policy from the Hubert Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Garrison lives in St. Paul's Como Park neighborhood with his wife, Clare, and their goldendoodle, Honey. He looks forward to centering economic justice at work in the county and ensuring we are building a community for future generations. He plans to prioritize creating more deeply affordable housing, investing in economic development, and ensuring county services are responsive to the needs of residents. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/leadership/board-commissioners/garrison-mcmurtrey-district-3>



Sam Simmons, LADC, behavioral consultant, conference co-creator, author, and co-host of the "Voices" on KMOJ FM has over 35 years of experience as an alcohol and drug counselor and behavioral consultant, focusing on trauma-informed strategies to address addiction, violence, and trauma, mainly aiming to improve the lives of African American men and their families. He developed a culturally specific curriculum to engage men and boys in promoting healthy, nonviolent relationships. An Adverse Childhood Experience Interface Trainer in Minnesota, Sam has led presentations on historical trauma and partnered with various organizations to dismantle barriers to healing.

He has received numerous accolades, including the 2007 Kirby Puckett Legacy Award and the 2009 Governor's Council on Faith and Community Service Initiatives Best Practices Award. In 2014, he was honored with the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network Excellence in Fatherhood Award and the 2016 Healing the Hidden Wounds of Racial Trauma Award. In 2018, he was recognized by the city of Minneapolis recognized him as a Public Health Hero for his innovative work in the community, and the NFL honored him for his efforts to stop violence against women. In 2024, he received Minnesota's Professional of the Year Award from the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Minnesota for his exceptional work with Black men.

Sam co-hosts the "Voices" radio show on KMOJ FM, discussing issues that affect urban communities. He is well-respected nationwide for his insights on African American historical trauma and his successful Community Empowerment Through Black Men Healing Conference, noted as innovative and leading-edge. He also wrote "Just Sam: A Black Man's Journey to Healing," which explores trauma's impact on Black men and provides a pathway to healing and empowerment. Sam emphasizes, "A community is as strong as the information it's given."



Dr. Nathan T. Chomilo's work centers marginalized communities in health policy so that we can dismantle racism in health care & provide children & families an equitable opportunity for health & well-being. He also works to understand and demonstrate how physicians and health systems can be accountable for producing racial & health equity. He is the Medical Director for the State of Minnesota's Medicaid & MinnesotaCare programs and practices as a General Pediatrician with Park Nicollet Health Services/HealthPartners.

He was previously tapped by Governor Tim Walz to serve as the State of Minnesota's COVID-19 vaccine equity director and as a Senior Advisor on Equity to the Minnesota Commissioner of Health. He is the Chair-elect of the

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American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Section on Minority Health Equity. He serves on the board of Reach Out and Read and is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Minnesota Medical School. He has been recognized by the City of Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights as a 2019 History Maker at Home recipient, Minnesota Physician, which named him one of the 100 most influential health care leaders in 2020 and 2024, and the Aspen Institute, which selected him to be an Aspen Ascend Fellow in 2022. He lives in Minneapolis with his wife & sons. (Bluesky/Social Media: @ChomiloMD and LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ChomiloMD/>)

Youth Presenters



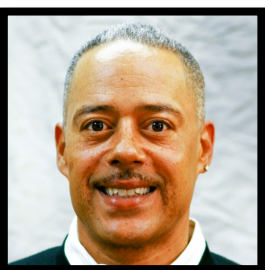
BLACK YOUTH HEALING ARTS CENTER and the IRREDUCIBLE GRACE FOUNDATION

The Black Youth Healing Arts Center is a safe space in Saint Paul's Frogtown neighborhood for Black youth to receive healing for their un/under-processed historical trauma. Unearthed historical trauma blocks the potential of full humanity and the expression of gifts. The Black Youth Healing Arts Center (BYHAC) provides cultural, ancestral, and innovative processes to healing for Black youth foremost, while creating safe spaces and healing opportunities for youth of color.



Irreducible Grace Foundation (IGF) is a non-profit that creates safe spaces for youth of color. IGF provides mentoring, life skills, employment, self-care practices, and safe spaces for teens and young adults. Using visual and performing arts and movement techniques, we help young people learn new skills for dealing with stress and trauma and fostering their voices.

Workshops



Dr. Jonathan Lofgren, a native Minnesotan with 35 years of behavioral health and education experience, holds a Ph.D. in Education - specializing in Training & Performance Improvement from Capella University, a Master of Science in Community Counseling Psychology and Human Services from Springfield College, and his undergraduate degree in Interdisciplinary Social Science from the University of South Florida. Jonathan is an MN Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor and a member of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers. Dr. Lofgren is a full-time, Time Unlimited Faculty member at Minneapolis College and a visiting faculty member at other regional colleges and universities.

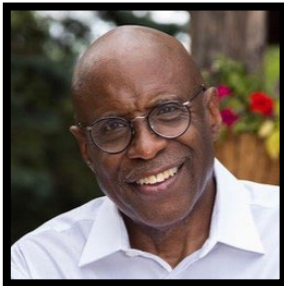
Dr. Lofgren designed, developed, and launched Minneapolis College's Collegiate Recovery Program, Adler Graduate School's Co-Occurring Disorders master's degree specialization, and Minneapolis College's Student African American Brotherhood program. In 2016 and the 2024-2025 academic year, Jonathan was named a Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' Outstanding Educator. In 2023, Lofgren was inducted into the African American Museum of Addiction, Treatment, and Recovery's Hall of Fame.

Dr. Lofgren is a Board Member of Twin Cities Recovery Project, More Than a Single Story, a founding board member of the Center for African American Recovery Development (CAARD), and a member of the Minnesota Association of Black Psychologists and the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP.

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Dr. Cedric Weatherspoon, DMFT, LMFT, President of Empower Therapeutic Support Services Inc., is a licensed marriage and family therapist and the founder of Empower Therapeutic Support Services, Inc. With over 20 years of experience specializing in the mental health and well-being of Black boys and men, Dr. Weatherspoon is recognized for his culturally responsive, trauma-informed approach to therapy, leadership development, and community engagement. His work spans various settings, including schools, correctional facilities, and community-based organizations, focusing on breaking generational cycles of trauma, dismantling systemic barriers, and fostering resilience within Black communities. Dr. Weatherspoon is also the creator of the Afrocentric Systemic Leadership Program (ASLP), a leadership model designed to empower Black individuals through cultural identity, mentorship, and holistic support. His passion lies in creating safe, healing spaces where Black boys and men can reclaim their narratives, strengthen familial bonds, and develop into confident, thriving leaders.



W. Curtis Marshall, MS, is a former Public Health Strategist/Consultant for the Wisconsin Division of Public Health. In this role, he consulted Wisconsin and national fatherhood agencies and consulted on the impact of fatherhood on maternal-child health and birth outcomes. He co-founded the Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative and co-authored the Wisconsin Statewide Fatherhood Plan under Former Governor Jim Doyle's Administration. He currently leads strategic partnership development for health consortiums, non-profits, consultations, community-based organizations, and national workgroups.

Curtis has over twenty-five years of experience assessing organizational capacity and readiness for leading population-based health improvement strategies. He is recognized as an engaged change leader who builds and facilitates healthcare partnerships to make sustainable progress on community health issues.



Felicia Perry is an accomplished Economic Development Strategist and Creative Entrepreneur with a deep passion for supporting the growth and prosperity of individuals, organizations, and communities. She is the Founder of DesignHer Life, LLC, where she supports ARTrepreneurs and small business owners through business strategy, creative entrepreneurship coaching, and community wealth-building initiatives.

In her current role as Economic Development Manager at Rondo Community Land Trust, Felicia leads initiatives that directly support small businesses, including access to funding, commercial property acquisition, and business incubation. She spearheads commercial revitalization efforts, such as the Rondo Exchange Small Business Incubator, ensuring that entrepreneurs can thrive in sustainable, community-centered economic ecosystems.

Felicia's expertise spans nonprofit leadership, economic development, and real estate strategy. As Business & Commercial Real Estate Manager at Partnership in Property Commercial Land Trust (PIPCLT), she developed infrastructure and support systems for emerging business owners and managed the organizations commercial real estate portfolio. Previously, as Executive Director of the West Broadway Business and Area

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Coalition, she led a capital campaign that raised over \$4 million and increased the organization's revenue, driving major economic and cultural placekeeping projects, including the FLOW Northside Arts Crawl and Open Streets West Broadway.

A champion of creative entrepreneurship, Felicia has worked extensively as an Artist Career Consultant with Springboard for the Arts, guiding artists in navigating the business side of their creative work. She also previously hosted "DesignHER Life" on KRSM Radio, where she interviewed women and non-binary ARTrepreneurs about building careers aligned with their passions.

Felicia's leadership extends to community engagement and advocacy. She serves on multiple boards, including Northside Awesome Fund and Vivid Black Paint Circus Arts, and has co-chaired the METRO Blue Line Extension Business Advisory Committee and the West Broadway Livability Coalition. She is also a certified yoga instructor and meditation guide, curating wellness experiences that prioritize collective care, including her 22/22 Guided Meditation series.

Her educational background includes certifications from the Urban Land Institute's Real Estate Diversity Initiative (ULI REDI), coursework in Marketing at Metropolitan State University, and studies in Microbiology at the University of Minnesota.

Felicia continues to drive transformative change through economic and environmental justice, creative entrepreneurship, and holistic wellness, building sustainable pathways for individuals and communities to thrive.



Andre Dukes, oversees the Early Childhood and Community Impact strategy, which focuses on ensuring that NAZ scholars are ready for kindergarten through access to quality early learning centers, scholarships, screening, parent support and education, and advocacy. Throughout his career, he has learned a great deal about how experiences shape child behavior and how strong communities, environments, and supports can promote healthy development and prevent harmful behavior in children.

Before joining NAZ, Andre worked for several years as a community Pastor. He worked in partnership with Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis on the issue of youth violence prevention. Andre holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the Minnesota Graduate School of Theology and a Certificate in Infant Mental Health and Early Childhood at the University of Minnesota Center for Early Education Development. He serves on the Think Small board and is a member of the MinneMinds executive committee.



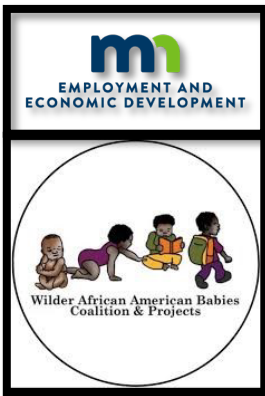
Taharka Sankara, MSW, LCSW, and LCADC has a broad array of experience that intersects with multiple service delivery systems targeting the various needs of youth and families. He holds a Master of Social Work degree from Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. He is licensed in Clinical Social Work and Clinical Alcohol and Drug Counseling.

In addition, he is certified as an anger management treatment provider (AMTP) and a trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapist (TF-CBT). As a clinical consultant and facilitator, he can fuse qualified lived experience, education, and professional expertise to empower others. Using first-hand experience, he demonstrates how turning stumbling blocks into stepping stones is possible.

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As the founder and current managing member of Counseling Support Services, LLC, he consults with other professionals to provide a wide array of services and resources to parents and other responsible adults and develop effective strategies that best support children and families.

(<https://www.counselingsupportservices.com/>)



Greg Norfleet, Director of the Paid Family and Medical Leave Program, was appointed by Governor Tim Walz in 2023. Previously, he was chief operating officer for the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. he was deputy director for operations at the Massachusetts Paid Family and Medical Leave program, which launched in 2021. Before that, he was a member of the Massachusetts Strategic Innovation team, an in-house consulting group deployed on critical initiatives throughout state government on behalf of the Governor's Office. Norfleet was a government innovation fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School, and he holds an MSc in evidence-based social intervention from the University of Oxford and a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology and criminal justice from Indiana University.

Panlist:

Department of Employment and Economic Development are collaborating with the African American Babies Coalition and Projects (of the Wilder Foundation) to recruit panelists who fulfill one or more of the following: Can personally speak to the experience of Black fatherhood, are community leaders who are part of fatherhood and/or family-related initiatives or organizations, can speak to the policies and research relevant to Paid Leave and Black fatherhood. Although we do not have confirmed panelists yet, we have a very strong list of candidates we plan to recruit as soon as possible.



Jeremiah Ellis brings a unique perspective to exploring Black family history and its role in healing. Rooted in his own experiences as a father and his deep commitment to understanding the complexities of intergenerational trauma, Ellis approaches historical research with empathy and a focus on personal narratives.

While his previous work has addressed broader themes of Black history in Minnesota, including the contributions of Black Rosies during World War II and the significance of the Sterling Club, his primary focus for this workshop is the intimate and often unspoken aspects of Black family life. Ellis will share insights drawn from 100 years of his own St. Paul family history, illustrating how archival resources and genealogical research can be powerful tools for navigating grief and breaking cycles of trauma.

His academic background in Public Administration, Strategic Management, and Theology provides a framework for understanding the social and historical contexts that have shaped Black fatherhood. However, it is his personal connection to the workshop's themes, as a father deeply invested in the well-being of his family, that will guide the discussion.

Ellis's involvement with the African American Interpretive Center of Minnesota and the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission underscores his commitment to preserving and sharing Black stories.

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He lives in Saint Paul with his wife and son. In this workshop, he will share his family's journey, emphasizing the role of family history in intergenerational healing.



Pleasant Radford, Jr., Health Equity Officer, joined UCare in 2020 in the inaugural role of Health Equity Officer. In his role, he develops, oversees, and implements an organization-wide health equity program that promotes and advances health equity for all members and communities.

Radford has more than 15 years of driving systemic transformation through health equity innovation in the healthcare, nonprofit, and academic sectors. He has proven leadership spanning evaluation, training, programming, policy, and advocacy realms - all grounded in trust-based community relationships - to identify and reduce inequities in healthcare. Prior to UCare, he led the evaluation of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Center for Prevention's multi-million dollar portfolio of healthy eating, physical activity, and commercial tobacco prevention. At UnitedHealth Group, Radford spent four years as a consultant to streamline medical insurance products, increase customer retention, and strengthen brand recognition among Medicaid and Medicare members. Previously, he conducted community engagement research at the University of Chicago, advocated for Chicago Public School pregnant and parenting youth students at the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health, and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nicaragua.

Radford is a national health equity leader and speaker who has received numerous accolades and distinctions for his leadership and contributions to the healthcare community, including state of Minnesota appointments to the African American Health State Advisory Council and the Governor's Community Council on Inclusion and Equity and recognition by Managed Healthcare Executive magazine as a 2024 Emerging Leader in Healthcare. In 2023, Radford received the NAHSE Program of the Year for the Heart of Equity podcast, a national podcast that talks with Black healthcare professionals to learn what they are doing to advance health equity in the Black community. Radford currently serves as the health equity committee leader of the American Health Insurance Program (AHIP), Association of Community Affiliated Plans (ACAP), Minnesota Council of Health Plans (MCHP), and Alliance of Community Health Plans (ACHP), and is the Minnesota ambassador of the National Association of Health Services Executives (NAHSE).

Radford earned his B.A. in Spanish and B.S in Psychology from the University of Illinois and his MBA in Finance from the University of Saint Thomas in Minneapolis. He lives in Minneapolis with his wife and two children.

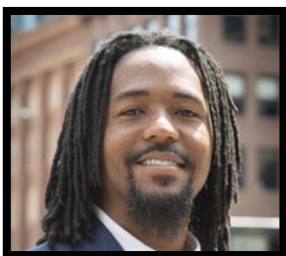
Panelists:

- **Collins Eboh, Equity Business Partner, UCare**, has served in numerous roles and has worked in a variety of units that specifically focus on diversity, social justice, public health, facilitation, and public policy. Father of three sons.
- **Cedrick Frazier, Attorney and Minnesota State Representative**, has a demonstrated history of working in the public and education sectors. Father of three girls.

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Naajee Dennis, MA, is a Victim Survivor and Youth Program Supervisor at the Domestic Abuse Project. She is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor with 6 years of experience in trauma-informed care and cultural competency, dedicated to dismantling oppressive practices within BIPOC communities in the mental health field. Demonstrates expertise in policy implementation, program development, and staff training, focusing on creating anti-racist interventions and fostering inclusive environments. Passionate about empowering diverse populations through innovative therapeutic strategies and collaborative partnerships.



Phillip McGraw, as a young father of three by age 25, I experienced firsthand the toll that generational trauma, mental health struggles, and toxic environments can take on a person and their family. My healing journey began when I recognized that I was both a victim of my past and a participant in perpetuating harmful patterns. Through therapy, self-care, and intentional growth, I transformed my life and rebuilt my relationships with my children.

In my book, *The Greatest Love Story*, I delve into the lessons I learned about self-awareness, forgiveness, and the power of love, not just for others, but for myself. Today, I am dedicated to helping other Black fathers break the cycle of trauma and create legacies of health, happiness, and connection.



Jimmie L. Heags, Jr., is a seasoned counseling professional with over 20 years of experience in education and therapy. A graduate of Metropolitan State University and Adler Graduate School, Jimmie holds degrees in Individualized Studies and Psychotherapy. He's accredited with three distinct licenses in school, clinical, and drug and alcohol counseling, and has certifications in Trauma Informed Practice and Co-Occurring Disorders. As a recognized authority in his field, Jimmie is an LPC & LPCC board-approved clinical supervisor by the Minnesota Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy.

Jimmie's practice primarily serves black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). His counseling approach is marked by genuine curiosity, treating his clients' thoughts, feelings, and experiences with respect and honor. He is a proficient trainer and consultant in Restorative Practices, Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI), and other Social Emotional Learning (SEL) methods. Outside his therapy work, Jimmie is an Adjunct Instructor at the Adler Graduate School and an active Minneapolis NAACP's Integrated Health Committee member. Committed to providing comprehensive mental health services, Jimmie continually incorporates new insights, such as the generational trauma work of Resmaa Menakem, to enhance his practice and better serve his clients.



Dr. Altreisha Foster is a public health leader, microbiologist, author, and equity strategist dedicated to advancing racial and gender equity in health and justice systems. She holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Microbiology from Howard University College of Medicine and a Master of Public Health from the Milken School of Public Health at George Washington University.

With expertise in infectious disease research, trauma-informed care, and strategic planning, Dr. Foster has worked across academia, government, and community sectors to address disparities in health and social systems. She is

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the president of the Cake Therapy Foundation, a nonprofit that empowers women and girls through baking as a tool for healing, resilience, and entrepreneurship. She also leads Strategic Health Solutions, a consulting firm specializing in health equity, infectious disease preparedness, and public policy.

Dr. Foster is the author of three books: *Cake Therapy: How Baking Changed My Life*, *Lessons I Never Learned from My Father*, and the guided journal *A Slice of Joy and Healing*. She also hosts the *Cake Therapy Podcast*, where she explores the intersection of baking, mental health, and personal transformation.

A sought-after speaker, Dr. Foster has presented at international conferences and public health forums, collaborating with policymakers, healthcare organizations, and community leaders to drive meaningful change. A dedicated mentor and advocate, she remains committed to fostering inclusive, sustainable health systems that bridge gaps between policy, practice, and community needs.



Dr. Trish Skophammer serves as the Child Support Services Division Director in the Ramsey County Attorney's Office located in St. Paul, Minnesota. She has 27 years of experience in child support. She has been involved in national, regional, and local associations with conference planning committees, policy workgroups, and DEI initiatives. In addition to her expertise in child support policy and practice, Trish's expertise includes topics related to organizational leadership. Trish has a master's degree in organizational leadership from Bethel University and a doctorate degree in public administration from Hamline University.



Guy Bowling is a Planning Specialist for the Child Support Services Division, Office of the Ramsey County Attorney, John J. Choi. As a former Director of the FATHER Project, he has overseen substantial multiple grants funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, and the Office of Family Assistance. Guy brings over 30 years of experience working with low-income, unmarried, non-custodial fathers and fragile families. In 2012, he received the Ronald F. Johnson Award at the National Center for Strategic Planning and Community Leadership's 14th Annual International Fatherhood Conference and has been

inducted into the Spirit of Fatherhood Hall of Fame. His specific area of focus is working with low-income, non-custodial, never-married fathers and their families in culturally specific, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and rural communities. As a nationally recognized fatherhood leader and speaker, Mr. Bowling has delivered more than 450 fatherhood trainings, keynotes, consultations, and workshops with public/private agencies in 30 states and two countries over his 30+ year career. He has a Master of Public Affairs (MPA) degree from the University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute. He was selected as a 2020 Bush Fellow from the Bush Foundation Fellowship Program.



Joe Fick is a dedicated father of three young men. With 25 years of experience at the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, Joe has served in various roles, primarily focusing on drafting legal documents and providing testimony in hearings related to establishing support and paternity. Currently, he serves as a supervisor, leading teams responsible for establishing child support and paternity orders and managing service of process.

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The Panelist



Brandon Jones, M.A., CPPM, is the Executive Director of the Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health (MACMH), where he utilizes his extensive experience in consulting, mental health, and leadership development. His expertise includes Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), historical and intergenerational trauma, social and emotional intelligence (EQ), leadership development, and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Brandon earned a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Minnesota, a master's degree in Community Psychology from Metropolitan State University, and a master's degree in Psychotherapy (Marriage and Family Therapy) from Adler Graduate School. As a 2013 Bush Foundation Leadership Fellow, he is dedicated to impactful leadership and community transformation. Guided by his motto, "Live life with purpose, on purpose," Brandon continues to inspire growth and resilience in the communities he serves.



Demarcus Solo Ford, I'm a father and a figure to many. Also, I'm a writer-producer, director, and community activist, and I'm the owner of the **MINNESOTA COLD TALK PODCAST**.

Spoken Word



Joseph S. Bard, aka Drunken Monkeee (like the martial art style), is a dynamic force in the culture — a raw and fearless hip-hop and spoken-word artist, youth specialist, and community leader. Known for his electrifying performances and unapologetic voice, he merges art with activism to inspire and empower. Beyond the mic, Drunken Monkeee is an experienced event planner, community facilitator, and radio host who curates spaces that uplift local talent and foster meaningful dialogue. As the owner of WTCLR – Feel Good Radio for the People, he utilizes the airwaves to amplify underrepresented voices and disseminate messages that resonate with the people.

**"When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."
Audrey Lorde**

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