

## 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Empowerment Through Black Men Healing Conference



### Speakers & Guests



**Lavon Morris-Grant** is the Executive Director/Founder of MACOSH Healing Network, the first culturally specific, holistic African American non-profit, domestic violence organization in the State of Georgia. She is a social justice expert, gifted international and keynote speaker and dedicated political activist on vital social and psychological issues including; domestic violence, mental illness, trauma recovery, suicide prevention and gun control.

Lavon is an entrepreneur and accomplished author, having written many articles and two critically praised books, *Whom Shall I Fear: A Spiritual Journey of a Battered Woman*, describing the brutality she and her family endured at the hand of an abusive spouse, ultimately resulting in him attempting to take her life and shooting her several times. In her latest book, released in 2014, *Who Will Speak For My Children: Healing Through The Trauma*, Lavon describes the powerful, debilitating and lingering effects that trauma leaves behind and how she, and her three children, personally survived, recovered and thrived through multiple, devastating traumas. Lavon's mission is to educate others on the insidious nature of domestic violence and the painful dynamic of the crippling trauma that ensues, as well as to instill hope and inspire others who are enduring struggle and strife to take action to live violent free lives.

Over the past 20 years, she has traveled throughout the U.S., and globally, offering intensive training and powerful keynote presentations to universities, colleges, religious and social justice organizations and corporations. Lavon's speaking topics include; Healing through Trauma, Domestic Violence Faith-Based Training, Building and Strengthening Relationships within Communities of Color, Teen Dating Violence, Sexual Assault of The Little Girl, etc. She is a knowledgeable, informative presenter and a gifted, motivational speaker who fearlessly addresses the social and systematic barriers of oppression that negatively impact individuals' lives.

By invitation, Lavon spoke alongside Democratic Party Presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton, at a press conference sponsored by the Americans for Gun Safety Foundation at the White House to appeal to local, state and federal authorities to strictly enforce the gun restrictions on domestic violence protective orders. She also appeared on a domestic violence Public Service Announcement hosted by Verizon with CBS Sportscaster Analyst, James Brown. Lavon aspires to and inspires in others the philosophy and belief that we should never allow our circumstances or others to define who we are.



John Turnipseed is a former gang leader, pimp and drug dealer, who spent his childhood battling demons brought on by a volatile, abusive father. In a 20-year journey, John Turnipseed has transformed into a community leader, pastor, speaker, and serves as the Director of The Center for Fathering and Vice President of Urban Ventures, a 21-year-old non-profit set in the heart of the same Minneapolis gang territory that John and his family terrorized. John's life-changing turnaround fueled his passion for rebuilding relationships between fathers and their families. John and the

Center for Fathering team have now developed programs that reach over 600 men and 200 women a year.

His story powerfully demonstrates how faith, hope, and forgiveness backed up by persevering mentors and role models are essential for real and relevant transformation. It also encourages us all to never give up on people. John's "redemption" and work at The Center for Fathering are highlighted in a Fox News update by the same investigative reporter who once helped police capture him. John's story was selected as the first "Everyday Hero" segment by Twin City Television and was nominated by Amicus, a mentoring program for prisoners. John's life is highlighted in the film *Turnipseed* ([www.turnipseedfilm.com](http://www.turnipseedfilm.com)) which is used in classes at the American University through the Department of Justice.

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



**LaDonna Redmond** is an activist that has worked on several initiatives that have created greater access for community residents. LaDonna co-founded a substance abuse treatment facility, Sisterhouse. Sisterhouse is dedicated to the recovery of women.

LaDonna successfully worked to get Chicago Public Schools to evaluate junk food, launched urban agriculture projects, started a community grocery store and worked on federal farm policies to expand access to healthy food in low-income communities. LaDonna is a 2003 WK Kellogg Food and Society Policy Fellow. In 2009, Redmond was one of 25 citizen and business leaders named a Responsibility Pioneer by Time Magazine. LaDonna presented at 2 Tedx events: Twin Cities and Manhattan. Her Tedx Manhattan talk is Food + Justice = Democracy is widely distributed.

In early April 2013, she launched the Campaign for Food Justice Now (CFJN), a membership-based organization that uses a race, class, and gender analysis to promote food and agricultural system reforms and advocate for the adoption of right-to-food policies in the U.S.

She is currently Diversity and Community Engagement manager for Seward Community Co-op. In that role, LaDonna leads an effort to build a natural foods co-op in a historically African American community. The 2nd co-op opened October 2015. LaDonna is a Qualified Administrator (QA) for the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). LaDonna is also a facilitator who believes that every community has the intellect to heal itself. As a facilitator, LaDonna supports any configuration of a community to find its unique pathway to wholeness and sustainability.



**Tiffany Turner-Allen** is best known for her passionate style. Her work has been intense and across various issues of health, public health and education; her areas of expertise include Violence in the Black Community, Violence Against Women, Engaging Black Men and Boys, HIV & AIDS, Adjudicated Youth, Educational Equity, Animal Abuse, Bullying, School to Prison Pipeline, Infant Mortality, Healthcare Reform & Access, Food Deserts, Technology & the Digital Divide, Returning Citizens, Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Human Trafficking and Stalking. She holds a BA in

Communications and a minor in African-American studies from George Mason University; as well as a Certificate in Community Health Leadership from Morehouse School of Medicine. Lastly, she is very proud of her roles as wife, daughter, mother, pet-parent, friend, advocate, activist, trainer, mentor, mentee and leader. As a proven leader with remarkable dedication, she is driven to experience new things, people, and opportunities and lives by her desire and determination to enhance the lives of others! Tiffany has embarked upon the next and natural phase in her career as the Program Director for Ujima – The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community. She focuses on training, education, outreach and policy advocacy around domestic violence, sexual violence and community violence in the Black community. More info: [ujimacommunity.org](http://ujimacommunity.org)



**Michael Sweetney** starred at Georgetown before being selected by the Knicks with the No. 9 pick in the 2003 draft. He currently Family Centered Specialist providing case management, advocacy services for client's and actively participate in quality improvement projects. Recently he has been speaking about his battle with depression and advocating for more mental health services.

**Family Centered Specialist, House of Still, Inc., Suitland, MD  
Jan. 2017 – Present**

- Responsive to the client's identified needs
- Provide case management and advocacy services for client's
- Assess client's need for community services and finding community resources in a timely manner
- Provide individual treatment with counseling and assist client in keeping appointments
- Complete all documentation and paperwork in accordance with agency standards
- Report concerns regarding client services
- Actively participate in quality improvement projects
- With supervision help identify client needs and triggers

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



**Larry A. McKenzie, Head Coach Minneapolis North Boys Basketball**

A coach, author, educator, Larry McKenzie, the First coach to win four straight state titles in the 100-year history of the Minnesota State Boys Basketball at Minneapolis Patrick Henry and most recently became the first coach in Minnesota history to lead two schools to multiple state titles after having now led Minneapolis North to two straight Class A state titles.

He is a long-time community and youth advocate with 25 plus years of experience working with urban youth. His service to young people has earned him numerous awards and recognition including KARE 11's Eleven Who Care, KTCA's Everyday Hero, the Minneapolis Park Board's Volunteer of the Year, and Positive Image Father of the Year.

He is author or co-author in three publications, Basketball So Much More Than Just a Game, Let Me Testify . He is featured in Chuck Brown's X's O's and W's. He is co- host of a weekly program titled Community Value Conversations on KMOJ 89.9 FM radio.



**Sam Simmons, AA, LADC** has over 29-year experience as an alcohol and drug counselor and behavioral consultant specializing in practical culturally sensitive trauma informed work with African American males and their families with a focus on addressing chronic pain, chemical dependency and interpersonal violence and racial trauma focused on improve outcomes.

In 2008, he developed a training focused African American historical trauma as part of a broad range of culturally sensitive trauma informed projects and strategies to address increasing disparities confronting the African American community. For over 9 years Sam developed and managed a culturally-specific trauma informed project and curriculum that engages African American males to promote healthy relationships to end violence against women and girls and community violence. Sam is an Adverse Childhood Experience Interface Trainer in the state of Minnesota.

He was awarded the 2009 Governor's Council on Faith and Community Service Initiatives Best Practices Award for his work with MN Department of Veterans Outreach Services, prison reentry and in the African American community. Sam received the 2016 Healing the Hidden Wounds of Racial Trauma award and the Black Tear Drop Award for his vision and leadership in culturally sensitive trauma informed work in the community and around the country. In 2017 Sam received the Champions for Children Award for his work in making the world a better place for children from the Minnesota Communities Caring for Children. He is co-host of "Voices" radio show on KMOJ FM that addresses issues of the urban community. Sam is co-creator of the Community Empowerment Through Black Men Healing conference called "Groundbreaking and Visionary". For that work in 2018 he received recognition from both Minneapolis and St. Paul Mayors and Minnesota's Governor.

**"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**

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