

YOUNG MINDS MATTER

MEETING THE MOMENT TOGETHER

2025 CONFERENCE PROGRAM



Hogg Foundation
for Mental Health



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YOUNG MINDS MATTER 2025 SCHEDULE

8:00 - 9:00AM	REGISTRATION & BREAKFAST		
9:00 - 10:00AM	Welcome & Opening <i>Led by Dr. Octavio Martinez, Vicky Coffee and Sheila Savannah</i> Beats and Lyrics to Go: Hip Hop and Building Power for Individuals & Communities <i>Keynote Speaker Dr. Raphael Travis</i>		
10:10 - 11:00AM	*CHOOSE YOUR OWN SESSION*		
	ROOM 501	ROOM 502	ROOM 503
	A People-Centered Budget: Where Do Your Taxes Go? – <i>Young Invincibles & Collective Action for Youth</i> <i>Led by Mariah Adeeko, Evelyn Barron, Markenley "Ken" Cherenfant</i> 	Intergeneration: Youth & Community Wellbeing – Air <i>Alliance Houston, Houston Young Monarchs, The Raices Collaborative Project</i> <i>Panelists: Leticia Gutierrez, Anthony D'Souza, Juliana Hernandez, Jessica Campos, Aubree Contreras, Analiah Espinoza; Moderated by Genesis Granados</i> 	Mind Over Matter! A Conversation with The Forgotten Third <i>–The Forgotten Third</i> <i>Panelists: Armenn Stewart, Nicholas Preston, Jonnathan McCoy, Shaheem Smith; Moderated by Karlton Harris</i> 
11:10 - 12:00PM	*CHOOSE YOUR OWN SESSION*		
	ROOM 501	ROOM 502	ROOM 503
	A SEAT at the Table: Student Organizing for Public Schools <i>– Students Engaged in Advancing Texas (SEAT) & Our Schools, Our Democracy</i> <i>Led by Maggie Stern, Christianna Thomas</i> 	Transforming Outcomes with Opportunity Youth <i>– PX Project</i> <i>Led by Jenny Treviño, Meredith Davis</i> 	Sustaining Ourselves: Sensing Into the Collective – <i>Erin McClarty, US Dream Academy, AESOP's Leadership Network</i> <i>Led by Erin McClarty, Ibraim Nascimento, Walter Hull, Dana Fields-Johnson</i> 

YOUNG MINDS MATTER 2025 SCHEDULE

12:00 - 1:00PM	LUNCH & YOUTH LEADERS IN CONVERSATION <i>Panelists: Ngoc Ho, Katelyn Tieu, Dakota Perry, Jacob Buchanan;</i> <i>Moderated by: MyKayla Searles-Houston, US Dream Academy</i>	
1:10 - 2:00PM	*CHOOSE YOUR OWN SESSION*	
	ROOM 501	ROOM 502
	Building Power in Our Communities <i>– FIEL Houston</i> <i>Led by Cesar Espinosa</i> 	From Canvas to Community: Art as Action <i>– HYPE Freedom School, Ctrl and Create, Art in the Heart</i> <i>Panelists: Cora Moore, Paulann Kirkland Jenkins, Veronica Cabrera-Moreno; Facilitation by Sheila Savannah, Prevention Institute</i> 
2:00 - 3:00PM	CLOSING SESSION Step Into Joy and Collective Power! <i>Led by Rev. Dr. Vanessa Monroe & Brandi Holmes</i>	
3:00 - 4:00PM	NETWORKING & POSTER SESSION	



= WORKSHOP



= PANEL

LOGISTICAL INFORMATION

- **Wifi Information:** Free internet is available at 'HCDE-Guest'. No password is required.
- Use the hashtag #YoungMindsMatter25 to join the conversation on social media. Feel free to tag the Hogg Foundation and Prevention Institute in your posts and stories!



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- **Wellness, Arts, & Meditation Space** available all day in Room 504.
- **Accessibility and Information Table:** If you need assistance today, please inform a staff member or visit the accessibility and information table.
- *CEU's will be available after the conference.*



2025 SESSIONS

YOUNG MINDS MATTER

9:00 — 10:00 AM

Welcome & Opening

Keynote Speaker – Dr. Raphael Travis; Beats and Lyrics to Go: Hip Hop and Building Power for Individuals & Communities

Session Description: In this keynote session interactive exercises will be used to build community and center conference themes of youth and family well-being, culture, and healthy environments. We will use lessons learned from how expressive arts and Hip Hop culture inform teaching, interventions, research, and prevention practices to address individual and community wellness. We will explore ways of engaging music through beats, hooks, and lyrics to promote empowerment and positive development within the context of everyday opportunities for and threats to well-being.

10:10 — 11:00 AM

Workshop: A People-Centered Budget: Where Do Your Taxes Go? – Young Invincibles & Collective Action for Youth

ROOM 501

Session Description: This workshop, co-led by Young Invincibles and Collective Action for Youth, equips young people with the knowledge and skills to influence local decision-making through the Harris County budget process. Participants will learn who makes the decisions on local budgets, how campaign promises translate (or fail to translate) into action, and why understanding these processes is essential for civic power. By combining practical knowledge with hands-on preparation, this session aims to show young people that civic engagement goes far beyond casting a ballot: it's about shaping the systems and budgets that directly affect their daily lives.

Panel: Intergeneration: Youth & Community Wellbeing – Air Alliance Houston, Houston Young Monarchs

ROOM 502

Session Description: This intergenerational panel will uplift youth voices while fostering dialogue across generations in exploring shared challenges and opportunities in movement spaces. Together, panelists will reflect on lessons from the past, innovations of the present, and visions for the future. The discussion will highlight practical strategies for collaboration, ensuring that young people are centered in decision-making while honoring intergenerational wisdom. Audience members will leave with insights and commitments to strengthen collective action for healthier, more just, and sustainable communities.



2025 SESSIONS

10:10 — 11:00 AM

Panel: Mind Over Matter! A Conversation with The Forgotten Third –*The Forgotten Third*

ROOM 503

Session Description: This panel discussion is surrounding young adults from TFT who have experienced gun violence, gang violence, incarceration and/or financial hardships. The panel discussion will be moderated by Karlton Harris, and the young adults will be providing solutions and protective factors to daily problems young adults' encounter. Topics will include education, employment, mental health, and social media conflict resolution.

11:10 — 12:00 PM

Workshop: A SEAT at the Table: Student Organizing for Public Schools – *Students Engaged in Advancing Texas (SEAT) and Our Schools, Our Democracy*

ROOM 501

Session Description: This workshop will provide an overview of Texas public education, focusing on the threats of school privatization coupled with underfunding public schools and attacking student rights. Presenters will give examples of student advocacy and organizing in response to that context with case studies focused on key policy topics such as surveillance, censorship, and student rights. Case studies will explore multiple strategies for young people to make change in their communities, from legal action against SB 12 to school board organizing against book bans.

Workshop: Transforming Outcomes with Opportunity Youth – *PX Project*

ROOM 502

Session Description: PX Project workforce development organization provides support to Opportunity Youth (OY) as they transition to the workforce, turning the kitchen into an immersive classroom for young adults to explore their identities, learn transferable skills, and open doors to their future. The organization's fellowship program uses a holistic, three-pronged approach that includes employability skill development, work-based learning, and personal development. This integrated framework addresses obstacles OY face, as research shows that mental health challenges and difficult community conditions are often the root cause of career readiness gaps.



2025 SESSIONS

11:10 — 12:00 PM

Workshop: Sustaining Ourselves: Sensing Into the Collective – Erin McClarty, US Dream Academy, AESOP's Leadership Network

ROOM 503

Session Description: Learn how to more authentically respond to this moment and your work by participating in this collective and embodied experience centered around mental health, community care, and collective action.

12:00 — 1:00 PM

Lunch & Youth Panel: Youth Leaders in Conversation – Ngoc Ho, Katelyn Tieu, Dakota Perry, Jacob Buchanan

ROOM 502

Session Description: Hear from young leaders across Houston about their work, challenges, and opportunities for organizations to support their leadership.

1:10 — 2:00 PM

Workshop: Building Power in Our Communities – FIEL Houston

ROOM 501

Session Description: Join us for a workshop focused on how communities can build collective power to drive meaningful change starting with our youth and families. FIEL Houston will share their inspiring history and firsthand experience in organizing and advocacy, highlighting practical actions communities can take to strengthen their voices and create a lasting impact.



2025 SESSIONS

1:10 — 2:00 PM

Panel: *From Canvas to Community: Art as Action* – HYPE Freedom School, Ctrl and Create, Art in the Heart

ROOM 502

Session Description: This panel highlights how young people use creativity—through theater, photography, music, and even hair culture, to tell their stories, address urgent social issues, and strengthen mental wellness. We will share how our organizations blend art, literacy, technology, and community partnerships to create safe, dynamic spaces for expression. From youth-led productions to interactive murals and multimedia campaigns, the programs amplify lived experiences while building skills in leadership and advocacy.

2:00 — 3:00 PM

Closing: *Step Into Joy and Collective Power!* – Rev. Dr. Vanessa Monroe & Brandi Holmes

ROOM 502

Session Description: Join us for Laughter Yoga, a playful, body–mind experience where deep breathing, movement, and contagious laughter melt away tension. No yoga mats or punchlines required—just an open heart and a willingness to let go. Together we'll laugh until our worries feel smaller, our spirits lighter, and our community closer. This session builds on the spirit of the day's workshops where we explored how young people are rewriting the script on advocacy—linking mental health, literacy, and liberation. We're reminded that wellness is not just personal; it's communal. When we share knowledge, care, and laughter, we build resilience that no system can silence. Come curious, come as you are—leave grounded, glowing, and connected."



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2025 SPEAKERS

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Raphael Travis is a professor in the College of Education and Human Development and director of the Master of Social Work program at the University of Delaware. He is a licensed clinical social worker, and his research, practice and consultancy work emphasize healthy development over the life-course, resilience and civic engagement. He also investigates the creative arts, especially Hip-Hop culture, as a source of health and well-being for individuals and communities. He is author of the book *The Healing Power of Hip Hop* and co-editor of *Music for Inclusion and Healing in Schools and Beyond* and *The Future of Youth Violence Prevention: A Mixtape for Practice, Policy, and Research*. His latest research, linking music engagement and well-being, appears in a variety of academic journals and book chapters.

Dr. Travis also leads The Collaborative Research for Education, Art, and Therapeutic Engagement (CREATE) Research Lab at UD, which partners with researchers, educators, artists and community-based organizations interested in the educational, health and therapeutic benefits of music and art engagement. Dr. Travis is also the founder and director of FlowStory, PLLC. FlowStory promotes the empowering aspects of Hip Hop culture as a critical tool for learning, growth and well-being across all ages, but especially with youth in family, education, therapy, after-school and summer program settings.

Dr. Travis' work continues to build on an understanding of how expressive arts in general, and Hip Hop culture more specifically, can positively impact mental health and well-being. Recent research continues to examine how active and intentional uses of music by youth and young adults can promote empowering music-related outcomes that link to both personal and community well-being, from self-care, to prevention, to treatment, to community engagement. Recent findings help us to more strategically provide opportunities for people, especially youth/young adults within trauma inducing and unhealthy environments around the globe, to use Hip Hop culture for investing in positive academic, social, emotional, and behavioral health outcomes, with or without professional support.



CLOSING SESSION

Rev. Dr. Vanessa Monroe

Rev. Dr. Vanessa Monroe is a visionary pastor, scholar, and spiritual director who has been leading transformational ministry for over two decades. She serves as the Senior Pastor of Bethel United Church of Christ, a vibrant, multicultural congregation dedicated to the theology of accompaniment. Under her leadership, Bethel Church has launched Journey HTX, an innovative living-learning community for formerly fostered youth. This initiative reflects Dr. Monroe's passion for bridging the church with the wider community through creative and impactful ministry. She has also held significant leadership positions within the United Church of Christ, including serving as Associate Conference Minister and Chair of the Conference Board in the Illinois Conference. Dr. Monroe currently serves as Board Chair for Huston-Tillotson University, a UCC-affiliated Historically Black College and University (HBCU).

A passionate advocate for justice, Dr. Monroe's ministry is deeply committed to spiritual and mental wellness. She is a sought-after preacher, lecturer, and workshop facilitator who draws on her unique interdisciplinary background. Dr. Monroe holds a Doctor of Ministry from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, a Juris Doctor from DePaul University College of Law, a Master of Divinity from McCormick Theological Seminary, and a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from Northwestern University. Her work is featured in several publications, including her co-authored book, *Exodus Women, Volume One*. She is a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and resides in Houston with her husband, Kevin, and their three children.

Brandi Holmes

Brandi Holmes is a Laughter Yoga International Certified Laughter Yoga Leader. She trained with the creator of Laughter Yoga, Dr. Madan Kataria, and she completed her certification in 2022. She is also a certified Mindfulness | Meditation teacher. When she isn't laughing or practicing presence, she can be found enjoying nature, working with teenagers, and passionately advocating for racial justice, equity, and liberation.



2025 SPEAKERS

WORKSHOPS & PANELS

10:10 — 11:00 AM

Workshop: A People-Centered Budget: Where Do Your Taxes Go? – *Young Invincibles & Collective Action for Youth*; Led By: *Mariah Adeeko, Evelyn Barron, Markenley "Ken" Cherenfant*

- **Mariah Adeeko** is a full-time Organizer at Young Invincibles, a proud Houston native, and alum of the University of Texas at Austin. With a deep love for advocacy and the change it can accomplish, Mariah has dedicated their work to empowering young adults and expanding civic engagement opportunities across Texas. Known as a connector of people and ideas, they bring energy and vision to building communities that are informed, engaged, and ready to lead.
- **Evelyn Barron** is a communications intern for Collective Action for Youth. She is a recent high school graduate from Worthing High School. Evelyn was born and raised on the Southside of Houston. Being raised in a neighborhood like Sunnyside and seeing how the juvenile system affects the youth, she would love to be able to help make a change in an environment she understands so well. She would love to be a part of the change and by being the communications intern, she believes she can help give the resources that CA4Y offers to the community.
- **Markenley "Ken" Cherenfant** is an educator, legal advocate, and youth mentor dedicated to empowering young people and fostering community growth. For over seven years he served as a public school teacher in Houston, teaching hundreds of students and mentoring countless Brown and Black young men. Markenley holds a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Certificate to teach AP U.S. History from Rice University. Currently, Markenley is interning at the office of prominent Houston attorney Jolanda Jones while pursuing a Juris Doctorate. Alongside his legal studies, Markenley serves as a full-time mentor for Sons of Sophistication in the Credible Messenger role. As a former youth offender, Markenley is inspired by Bryan Stevenson's "Just Mercy." He is committed to the effort in reducing recidivism and helping young people avoid reentry into the Juvenile Justice System. Markenley is an active member of the Momentum Men's Ministry at The Church Without Walls, meeting with his council of brothers on Saturdays. He is working towards becoming a deacon in his church. Driven by faith, Markenley strives to treat everyone with love and respect, believing that every neighbor is worthy of compassion and understanding regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and other differences.

2025 SPEAKERS

Panel: Intergeneration: Youth & Community Wellbeing – *Air Alliance Houston, Houston Young Monarchs, The Raices Collaborative Project*; Featuring: *Leticia Gutierrez, Anthony D'Souza, Juliana Hernandez, Jessica Campos, Aubree Contreras*; Moderated by *Genesis Granados*

- **Leticia Gutierrez:** As the Government Affairs and Community Outreach Director, Leticia keeps abreast of policy developments and oversees engagement with elected officials and stakeholders to advance Air Alliance Houston's goals. Prior to joining AAH, she served as the Chief of Staff at the Houston City Council.
- **Anthony D'Souza:** As the Community Air Monitoring Program Manager, Anthony oversees AAH's efforts to bring community-led air monitoring to neighborhoods affected by multiple air pollution sources, working closely with local residents on the campaign. He holds a B.Sc. in Environmental Science from Rice University and has experience working in Houston's environmental non-profit sector and community organizations. In his spare time, Anthony enjoys painting, keeping up with basketball and soccer, and spending time with family and friends.
- **Juliana Hernandez:** As a former intern with Air Alliance Houston, Juliana joins the team as the Government Relations and Community Outreach Coordinator. She brings her experience working at the Texas State Capitol during the 89th Legislative Session to our organization to continue expanding our policy and governmental reach.
- **Aubree Contreras:** At just eleven years old— Houston born and raised, Aubree Contreras is amongst the youngest activists who seek to hold elected officials accountable. She speaks on issues affecting her community including health impacts from environmental injustices and concerns over families being torn apart by ICE.
- **Genesis Granados (they/them):** As the Environmental Justice Programs Senior Manager Genesis is responsible for executing an organization-wide strategy and special initiatives to engage and empower residents and organizations in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies that advance clean air for all in the Houston/Harris county. In addition, they create comprehensive community engagement strategies that are more community informed and community led. In the last decade, their work has focused on breaking down health care barriers via advocacy, education and capacity building with fence-line communities including elders, young adults, and youth. In their previous health educator role at Legacy Community Health, they were able to build a deep understanding of the various issues and existing disparities that communities face when it comes to healthcare access. Additionally, they saw first hand how disasters (natural and chemical) are detrimental to community health. Their working framework incorporates environmental justice, reproductive, economic, language, and health justice.
- **Jessica Campos** is a dedicated community advocate and the driving force behind the Houston Young Monarchs, a family-oriented troop that blends social justice, STEAM education, and intergenerational learning. She has created a space where families come together to learn, lead, and find solutions to community challenges as a team. Her passion is empowering everyone to have a voice and work together toward a brighter future.

2025 SPEAKERS

- **Analiah Espinoza** is just 16 and already making a big impact. She's a program organizer and tutor with You Discover Math, helps lead Restorative Houston's initiatives for young women, and has even spoken at City Hall, where her advocacy caught the attention of council members and led to real community changes. She's also lobbied at the state capitol to advocate for her sister's needs. Anna's achievements are all her own, and she's just beginning her journey of making a difference.

Panel: Mind Over Matter! A Conversation with The Forgotten Third – *The Forgotten Third*; Featuring: Armenn Stewart, Nicholas Preston, Jonnathan McCoy, Shaheem Smith; Moderated by Karlton Harris

- **Shaheem Smith:** My name is Shaheem Smith. I was born in New Orleans, but I've been living in Houston for several years now. Like many people, I've faced my share of challenges, but everything started to change when I got involved with The Forgotten Third. That opportunity gave me the support and structure I needed to get my life back on track and refocus on my goals. Currently, I'm pursuing HVAC certification at Houston Community College (HCC), building hands-on skills that can lead to a solid career. But my journey doesn't stop there. In January 2026, I'll be returning to college to continue studying biomedical science, with the goal of becoming a forensic scientist. This field allows me to combine my passion for science with a deep desire to make a meaningful impact in the world. In addition to my academic and career goals, I also dream of becoming an author. Writing has always been a powerful outlet for me, and I've been steadily working on developing my voice and storytelling abilities. Through every step of this journey, I'm committed to growth, purpose, and using my experiences to inspire others who may be walking a similar path.
- **Jonnathan McCoy:** My Name Is Jonnathan McCoy. I'm from Houston, Texas. 3rd Ward Area. I'm 22 Years Old. I've been living in Houston my entire life and growing up wasn't easy. I wasn't always on the path I'm walking now. Life tested me with challenges that could've kept me stuck, but I made the decision to change. I learned that growth doesn't happen overnight, it's a process of falling, getting back up, and choosing not to quit. I've walked through struggles that once tried to break me, but I chose to rise instead of fall. Every setback taught me a lesson, and every mistake gave me wisdom. I'm focused on growth, peace, and building a better future for myself. I'm no longer who I used to be. I'm stronger, wiser, and moving forward with purpose. I'm currently working with Mr. Karlton with The Forgotten Third Program, and I am enrolled at HCC for HVAC to pursue my career and be a better person in life.
- **Nicholas Preston:** My name is Nicholas Preston. I've recently acquired my high school equivalency diploma. In the years that I have lived, I have been forced to live in places that weren't very humane. However, throughout the struggles and hard times I made it out of what seemed like hell for eternity. I managed to make something out of nothing that eventually became everything that I cherish. At times my life seemed unlivable, like there was a block between what I wanted and what I needed. My priorities were always set on my major goals and aspirations but I never pursued those goals and aspirations due to what my mind was going through at the time.

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- **Armeen Stewart:** My name is Armeen Stewart, and I am from Vicksburg, Mississippi. I moved to Houston, Texas in 2017. I used to come down here from my hometown for vacation, and I honestly loved the atmosphere. I took a big step in my life to ask my mother if we could move down here and she told me no the first time. I proceeded to ask her again and she told me no again. So, it was this time that we were out eating, and I explained the reason that I wanted to move to Houston. I continued to talk to her and explain the things that were going on that weren't good for me. Eventually we moved down here, and I got into some trouble that ended up getting pointed to Mr. Karlton and the Forgotten Third. This was the best thing that ever happened in my life. He helped me get my high school equivalency diploma and now I'm enrolled at HCC to obtain my HVAC Certification. I start school on October 14, 2025. I'm so excited!
- **Karlton Harris:** Karlton Harris is the Executive Director of The Forgotten Third. He is a community leader and speaker with more than 20 years of experience in designing and implementing supports to improve the lives of underserved youth and communities. Karlton served Houstonians as the Youth Violence Prevention City Lead for six consecutive years. As the lead, Karlton was responsible for the creation of The Houston Peace Youth Violence Strategic Plan and Houston Peace Youth Violence Prevention Coalition which focused on gun violence prevention, social determinants of health and increased protective factors surrounding credible messenger mentoring and community violence interruption. He is the author of the Award-winning book, "I'm Free! Now What?" and the soon to be released book "Credible Messenger, A My Brother's Keeper Story!" Karlton Harris is a Community Partner with The Forgotten Third as part of the project "Incorporation of a Health Approach to Hospital Violence Intervention Programs: The Integration of a Community and Hospital Based Initiatives to Reduce Gun Violence in a Large Metropolitan Area" at University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and is a member of the Steering Committee for the Community Firearm Violence Prevention Network.

11:10 — 12:00 PM

Workshop: A SEAT at the Table: Student Organizing for Public Schools – *Students Engaged in Advancing Texas (SEAT) and Our Schools, Our Democracy* – Led by: Maggie Stern (she/her), Christianna Thomas (she/her)

- **Maggie Stern (she/her)** is the Director of Community Engagement at Our Schools Our Democracy, where she leads grassroots organizing, community education, and communications strategy to support public schools and oppose education privatization. Maggie previously worked at the Children's Defense Fund of Texas, where she launched the YOUTHTX youth leadership program and led local and state policy advocacy with young Texans and their families. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Economics from Boston College and a Master in Public Affairs from the LBJ School at UT Austin.

2025 SPEAKERS

- **Christianna Thomas (she/her)** is a junior at Heights High School in Houston Texas. She has galvanized protest against the HISD takeover as well as helped to organize local and state action across Texas, via educational boot camps and seminars for students.
-

Workshop: Transforming Outcomes with Opportunity Youth – PX Project; Led by: *Jenny Treviño, Meredith Davis*

- **Meredith Davis** is the founder and executive director of PX Project, a career exploration and workforce development program in Houston that coaches young adults, helping them develop life skills, confidence, and career pathways through a hands-on culinary training model. A graduate of Centenary College of Louisiana, Meredith began her career as an educator, where she was honored as Teacher of the Year and created student programs that fostered self-confidence and belonging. She later transitioned into nonprofit leadership, guiding disaster recovery initiatives, community partnerships, and large-scale service projects before launching PX Project in 2020.
 - **Jenny Treviño** is a bilingual educator with a Master of Arts in Teaching and a deep passion for increasing equity in education. Her career centers on social-emotional learning, student-centered instruction, and community partnerships. Jenny, a Detroit '13 Teach for America alum, served as a teacher and special education specialist in Detroit and Chicago from 2013-2019, in traditional and alternative school settings. After returning home to Houston in 2020, Jenny joined Aldine ISD as a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) & Culture Specialist, where she supported SEL implementation at multiple campuses and district departments. Currently, as the Director of Youth Development at PX Project, Inc, Jenny oversees the Youth Development department, spearheading programming related to skill development and personal wellness and supporting her team. Her efforts have led to the expansion of employability skill instruction, mental health services, and more.
 - **Victor "Tae" Higgins**, PX Project Cohort 7 Fellow — Tae has been with PX Project since 2023. When he first joined Cohort 7, he felt as lost as a kid in a grocery store. Throughout the program, however, he was able to explore his options without repercussions because of the tools he was given. Two years later, Tae has received continuing support from PX Project while he attends school. Today, is more prepared than ever to navigate what comes, knowing that he'll have a helping hand. He is eager to start the next part of his journey.
-

Workshop: Sustaining Ourselves: Sensing Into the Collective – US Dream Academy, AESOP's Leadership Network; Led by: *Erin McClarty, Ibraim Nascimento, Walter Hull, Dana Fields-Johnson*

- **Erin McClarty** is founder of an impact focused company, combining design, strategy, and law to translate ideas into life- changing projects. Specializing in impact, we work with a range of organizations and individuals on an affordable fixed-fee model to develop clarity, gain confidence, and connect the dots to meaningful products, services, programs, projects, and initiatives.

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- Over the past 13 years, **Walter Hull** has become a rising Social Artist, Thought Leader, and Youth Development Strategist in Houston, TX. Through his work with the U.S. Dream Academy, a national mentoring dedicated to improving neighborhoods that have been harmed by mass incarceration, Walter has helped shape the organization's approach to community asset building through mentoring. As an artist, his choreography has deep roots in social justice stories in the black community that he refers to as his Village Responsibility. As Executive Director of Urban Souls Dance Company, he has created artist development workshops in Kigali, Rwanda, geared towards providing space for youth artists to develop as leaders in their communities. For the past three years, Walter has been a documentary filmmaker, sharing stories of the resiliency of black youth in America.
- **Ibraim Nascimento** is an Afro-Brazilian artist from the Recôncavo region of Bahia, whose work has already been exhibited in Brazil and the United States. Ibraim is known for his vibrant paintings, performances, and large-scale ephemeral sculptures that often feature (the community) audience participation. He is also an artist-activist linked to the defense of indigenous rights in Brazil.
- **Dana Fields-Johnson, MPA**, is a Director at Prevention Institute, a national nonprofit dedicated to advancing primary prevention and promoting safe, healthy, and equitable communities. In her role, Dana currently oversees an assortment of PI's Safety and Wellbeing projects that address mental health and wellbeing, community safety and violence as a public health issue, with an increasing focus on substance use prevention. This includes understanding these issues and their intersection with community trauma, resilience, and community determinants of health. Most recently, Dana co-lead the Communities of Care Initiative, a 6-year partnership with Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, aimed at providing training, technical assistance, and coaching support and peer learning opportunities to 10 community-based collaboratives throughout greater Houston working to implement collaborative approaches to community wellbeing. The goal is to strengthen and sustain efforts to transform the environments where people live, learn, work, play, and pray to improve resilience, mental health and wellbeing for youth and families.

12:00 — 1:00 PM

Lunch & Youth Panel: Youth Leaders in Conversation – Featuring: *Ngoc Ho, Katelyn Tieu, Dakota Perry, Jacob Buchanan*. Moderated by: *MyKalya Searles-Houston (US Dream Academy)*

- Born and raised in Houston, Texas, **Jacob Buchanan** has been part of the U.S. Dream Academy family for eight years and now serves as a Program Assistant with the Houston site. A founding member and organizer of the Scott Street Youth Institute—the Academy's high school leadership program—Jacob has been instrumental in designing and implementing youth-led mental health initiatives and community healing projects. He also helped produce a short film that highlights the importance of safe spaces for collective healing and dialogue. A 2025 graduate of Bellaire High School, Jacob previously interned at KTSU Radio and is currently a student at Houston Community College. His journey from youth participant to staff member reflects his commitment to leadership, creativity, and the continued growth of his community.

2025 SPEAKERS

- **Ngoc Ho** is an ambitious sophomore at Alief Kerr High School, hoping to pursue diplomacy and international relations in her future career. Advocating for equitable healthcare access and safe community initiatives, she focuses on supporting marginalized communities and youth of color as a Precinct 4 Student Representative on the Harris County Safe School Commission and as the founder of the Health Equity Workshop Series (HEWS). She envisions a future where every community is safe, inclusive, and empowered, ensuring that no one is left behind in accessing opportunities for health, education, and well-being!
- My name is **Katelyn Tieu**, a junior at Alief Kerr High School who has been involved with organizations such as AliefVotes, TeensforHealth, ProjectEmpowerHer, and more in which I have been given the opportunity to start my own projects for the community and am hoping to share with you all soon – along with clubs and organizations within my school. I began getting involved in advocacy work whilst noticing problems in the community of my school, discussing with my peers local issues we have all seen and personally experienced. In this, I found the connection between local issues and how we choose to represent ourselves - some who are afraid to voice their opinions and stance, left overshadowed. I began through my passion in getting involved with AliefVotes, now serving as an Events Manager and having the opportunity to host our annual Civic Engagement Youth Workshop – opening the floor for voices and young leaders across our community. From then on, I have gone on to branch out and understand the interconnectedness of community. This not only gave me the inspiration to work for the better, but understand the role that local officials, educators, and our leaders play in supporting young leaders.
- **Dakota Perry** is a Psychology major at Houston Community College and a former student of Madison High School. They are an active member of Youth x InReach, co-founded by Jornae Rideaux and Zoe Njemanze, and previously participated in the Hiram Clarke Community Resiliency Project through the Communities of Care initiative. Dakota is passionate about youth expression, access to support, and being heard. They believe organizations and adults must listen to young people and collaborate with them in decisions that impact their lives.
- **MyKayla Searles-Houston** serves as the Center Director for the U.S. Dream Academy at Hartsfield Elementary, where she leads with authenticity, creativity, and joy. A Dallas native, she moved to Houston to earn her Bachelor's in Psychology from the University of Houston and later completed her Master's in Public Health at UTHealth. MyKayla's journey with Dream Academy reflects her deep commitment to creating inclusive, healing-centered environments that help young people grow into emotionally aware leaders. Her approach blends mindfulness, joy, and authentic connection, fostering spaces where youth and families can thrive together. Beyond her work, MyKayla is a yoga instructor and advocate for joy who believes that nurturing others begins with nurturing ourselves.

1:10 PM — 2:00 PM

Workshop: Building Power in Our Communities – *FIEL Houston*

- **Mr. Cesar Espinosa** is a proud immigrant from Mexico City, Mexico . He was brought to the U.S. in 1991 at the age of 5. He is a former DACA recipient. After 33 years Mr. Espinosa was able to his status in the United States. Mr. Espinosa attended the prestigious Michael E DeBakey High School for Health Professions in HISD. He then went on to study at Houston Community College subsequently transferring to the University of Houston where he studied Political Science. Mr. Espinosa is Co-founder and current Executive Director of the largest Immigrant Led Civil Rights Organization in Texas named FIEL (Familias Inmigrantes y Estudiantes en la Lucha – Immigrant Families and Students in the Fight). FIEL is an immigrant-led organization that seeks to empower the immigrant community in Houston, the State of Texas and The United States. Mr. Espinosa has served and is currently serving on a variety of boards at the local, state and national level. He has also always looked to work on a variety of issues including, race relations, police reform and a variety of issues uplifting many communities. Mr. Espinosa is an advocate for immigrants rights, students rights and human rights. With his over two decades of experience in the field of organizing Mr. Espinosa has learned how true grassroots organizing can truly make the difference in our communities. Mr Espinosa is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards at the local, national and international level including the prestigious Alfonso Garcia Robles award from the Autonomous University of Mexico, the highest honor bestowed by the university to a non academic. Mr. Espinosa is married to Karynna and they have a beautiful son. Mr. Espinosa considers himself a “Proud Houstonian.”
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Panel: From Canvas to Community: Art as Action – *HYPE Freedom School, Ctrl and Create, Art in the Heart* with facilitation by *Sheila Savannah, Prevention Institute*

- **Veronica Cabrera-Moreno**, also known as "Roni," is a Houston native and an ardent advocate for the arts, particularly within underserved communities. Her guiding principle, "Everything in life is art," reflects her deep understanding of the pervasive nature of creativity in daily life and its impact on well-being. Rooted in her Hispanic heritage, Roni infuses her work with mixed media elements and vibrant colors, exploring her identity through the lens of Indigenous culture alongside local groups. Roni established an Art Center in North Houston. This center, named "Art in the HEART," stands as a community hub for the arts, fueled by Roni's vision to enrich and engage.

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2025 SPEAKERS

- **Paulann Kirkland Jenkins** is a passionate advocate for youth empowerment and education, dedicated to creating opportunities that inspire, uplift, and transform young lives. As part of the leadership team of HYPE Freedom School, Inc., Paulann has worked tirelessly to foster literacy, leadership, and self-confidence in young scholars, ensuring they have the tools to succeed academically and beyond. With a deep commitment to social justice and community engagement, she has helped to spearhead initiatives that provide safe, enriching learning environments where youth can develop their voices, embrace their identities, and cultivate a love for learning. Through this work, HYPE Freedom School has expanded its reach, impacting countless scholars and families through culturally responsive education, mentorship, and advocacy. Paulann continues to champion the potential of every child, believing that when youth are empowered, they become catalysts for change in their communities and beyond!
- **Cora Moore** is the Founder and Executive Director of CTRL+CREATE, a nonprofit that empowers youth to use art as a tool for activism, healing, and community change. She is passionate about creating spaces where young voices are amplified and transformed into action.
- **Sheila Savannah**, Managing Director at Prevention Institute, has over thirty years of experience in multisector collaboration and youth/family engagement to address wellness, safety, and equity. She is widely recognized for her contributions in the areas of health equity, mental health, capacity building, and therapeutic programming with children, adolescents, families, and communities. Sheila joined the Prevention Institute as a director in 2015, where her work has focused on building local assets for multisector systems transformation. In her leadership role on mental health, she focuses on its intersection with community resilience and the community determinants of health. Her projects take a public health approach to mental wellbeing and improving community environments—social connection, the built environment, and equitable opportunity—and aim to prevent and/or address mental health problems, trauma, substance misuse, and violence.



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