

BE *the* BRIDGE

Ottawa City Launch, Michigan

● Professional of Color Panel:

Panel Facilitator:



Robyn Afrik speaks publicly on various issues surrounding leadership, diversity, international adoption and race relations. In 2008, Robyn became the City of Holland Human Relations Commission Government and Community Relations/Social Justice Award recipient in recognition for advancing the cause of racial and cultural acceptance among the Holland Community. She has been featured in Mark DeYmaz's 2010 & 2013 Multiethnic Church Conference, hosted by Outreach Magazine and Christianity Today. She was also featured as the 2011 Martin Luther King (MLK) keynote speaker for the city of Dubuque, Iowa (IA) and co-planned and presented at the 2012 and 2013 Global Leadership breakout sessions for the Presidential National Prayer Breakfast (NPB) held in Washington D.C. with Dr. Barbara Williams Skinner and Ambassador Tony Hall. In 2018, she will publish a new release co-authoring "The Church in the 21st Century: The Creolization of Women of Color for Leadership," with Curtiss Paul DeYoung, in *Becoming Creoles: Theology and the Intersections of Injustice, Culture and Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press).

Robyn is a swim mom to three children and wife to a family living in a town that celebrates a rich Dutch heritage. She does this, represented as a Korean Adoptee, married to a West African while building a more inclusive community wherever she goes. Robyn has lived and traveled in various places such as Senegal, West Africa, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Seoul, Korea. Contact Robyn: assistant2afrik@gmail.com



Panelist: Yah-Hanna Jenkins Leys was born and raised on a small island in the West Indies, St. Kitts. She left in 2008 to pursue studies at the City College of the City University of New York, where she graduated in 2012 with a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies and English Literature. She then went on to pursue her graduate degree at the City College in Public Administration. However, after marrying her husband in 2013, she decided to continue her graduate career at Grand Valley State University where she focused on nonprofit management and leadership, receiving a Master of Public Administration degree in 2015. Yah-Hanna currently serves on the Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance and Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates boards. She also sits on the City of Holland's International Relations Commission and the Holland Young Professionals Membership Committee. In her current position as Development Director at the Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance, Yah-Hanna has been fortunate to work alongside individuals committed to seeing that everyone has an opportunity to thrive in this community.



Panelist: Jackie Frens

Jackie was born in Busan, South Korea and was adopted by Dutch American parents when she was 9 months old. She has lived in South Korea, Japan, Indonesia and the USA over the course of her life. Currently, she is a tech integration specialist for elementary and middle school students in Grand Rapids



Panelist: Lucia Rios, a National Disability Institute's 25@25 feature and Third Annual "My American Dream: Voices of Americans with Disabilities" video contest winner, has never seen her disability as limiting rather, she uses her voice and experience to inform leaders and communities across the State of Michigan on how to change the attitudes and structures that create a disabling environment. Born with Spina Bifada, Lucia has used crutches and a wheelchair since childhood. Lucia continues to be sought after by many businesses and organizations, most recently being invited to speak and train the Michigan Department of Civil Rights along with national leaders from the Department of Justice. Lucia currently resides in West Michigan and works with Disability Network across the Lakeshore while teaching work readiness programs for youth with disabilities.

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● Be The Bridge Group Leader Panel:

Panel Facilitator:



Jen Wickstrom is a devoted mother, wife, and friend. She is passionate about racial reconciliation in West Michigan and beyond. Jen is the proud mother of three children, ages 8, 10, and 11. Jen and her husband Ben adopted their youngest child from Ethiopia. She is very involved with Yezelalem Minch ministry in Ethiopia.

Believing that racial unity begins only through relationship with others, Jen followed a calling in 2015 to start a local "Be the Bridge" table, comprised of six women of different backgrounds and ethnicities. They follow a curriculum designed to foster the conversation around racial hardships, and help identify a path to reconciliation.

The work started by this group continues today.



Panelist: LaRissa Hollingsworth is the mom to two daughters, Ahmyere (21) and Bella (8). She is native of Lansing, MI but has called Grand Rapids home for over 13 years. She is an attorney at Drew, Cooper & Anding practicing in the complex commercial, business litigation and criminal defense. LaRissa serves on the Board of Directors for Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services and is a past board member for the Grand Rapids Bar Association, Grand Rapids Christian Schools Association, and New 2 You Shoppe. She also serves on a number of community committees.

LaRissa spends her free time running, cheering on the Spartans, and making memories with her daughters.



Panelist: Mark VanderWerf is an ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church who teaches Bible at Grand Rapids Christian High School. He and his family attend Sherman Street CRC in Grand Rapids. Together with his wife, he enjoys camping, traveling and exploring the lands of Narnia with his three young boys.



Panelist: Tom Prince is a CPA and shareholder at Hungerford Nichols, a CPA firm in Grand Rapids. He is a life-long Grand Rapids resident. Tom graduated from Grand Rapids Christian High School, Calvin College, and has an MBA from Grand Valley State University. Tom and his wife Laura and have 3 teenage daughters. He has enjoyed volunteering throughout the community in a variety of different roles, and is currently on the Board of Trustees of the Grand Rapids Christian Schools and serving as a reading tutor at Campus Elementary through the Schools of Hope program.

Panelist: James Baker is a mechanical tradesmen currently working in Lansing for General Motors Company as a millwright. James lives in the greater Grand Rapids area with his wife Dora, and is father of two adults and two Grand Rapids Christian middle school children. He has served as a deacon at Grace for the Nations Church where he and his family now attend. In his "spare", James really enjoys reading the Bible or any other Christian literature.