



**CLIC**  
Center for Learning Innovation & Change

# South Florida Mentoring Symposium

## **BUILDING A LEGACY FOR GLOBAL IMPACT**



**April 5, 2025  
9:00am-3:00pm**

**Betty T. Ferguson Recreational Complex,  
Miami Gardens, FL**

**3000 NW 199th St,  
Miami Gardens, FL 33056**



[www.clicsfl.org](http://www.clicsfl.org)



## PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

**Saturday April 5, 2025**

<b>8:30 AM - 9:00 AM</b>	<b>Check-in</b>
<b>9:00 AM - 9:30 AM</b>	<b>Continental Breakfast</b>
<b>9:30 AM - 9:40 AM</b>	<b>Invocation</b>
<b>9:40 AM - 9:50 AM</b>	<b>Welcome</b>
<b>9:50 AM - 10:00 AM</b>	<b>Village Vibes</b>
<b>10:00 AM - 10:30 AM</b>	<b>Keynote</b>
<b>10:30 AM - 10:45 AM</b>	<b>Networking Break Exhibitor Showcase</b>
<b>10:45 AM - 11:45 AM</b>	<b>Innovation Labs 1</b>
<b>11:45 AM - 12:45 PM</b>	<b>Lunch &amp; Youth Panel Discussion</b>
<b>12:45 PM - 1:45 PM</b>	<b>Innovation Labs 2</b>
<b>1:45 PM - 1:55 PM</b>	<b>Transition General Session</b>
<b>2:00 PM - 3:00 PM</b>	<b>Mentoring Excellence Honors</b>

**Closing Address**

## Center for Learning Innovation & Change Founders Journey



Dr. Francis Francois is a lifelong educator, youth advocate, and the visionary founder of the Center for Learning Innovation & Change (CLIC)—an organization dedicated to empowering underserved communities through mentorship, education, and holistic support. His life’s mission has always been clear: to create the kind of impact that changes lives, because his own life was changed by mentors who believed in him.

Raised in Miami’s Little Haiti, one of the city’s most impoverished neighborhoods, Dr. Francois grew up surrounded by adversity—high unemployment, crime, limited resources, and a lack of educational opportunities. Despite these circumstances, he overcame tremendous odds through the support of caring mentors and a fierce commitment to learning. These early experiences shaped his belief that every child—regardless of their zip code—deserves access to quality mentorship, education, and a community that believes in their potential.

Driven by that belief, he founded what was originally called the Pay It Forward Mentoring Program. Over time, the initiative evolved into CLIC, broadening its reach and services to support youth, families, and schools throughout South Florida. Under his leadership, CLIC has become a powerful force for change—offering mentorship, academic support, self-care strategies, and global exposure experiences that unlock new possibilities for young people.

Dr. Francois’s doctoral research, “Unlocking Success for Non-Traditional Students: A Case Study of Support and Mentorship,” serves as the backbone of CLIC’s mentoring model. His work highlights the transformational role that mentorship and wraparound support play in the lives of students who navigate education differently—and often with fewer resources. His academic insight, combined with his lived experience, has shaped CLIC into a values-driven organization rooted in empathy, excellence, and equity.

Today, Dr. Francois continues to lead with passion, purpose, and a profound sense of responsibility. Through CLIC, he is building an ecosystem of support that inspires youth to thrive and encourages communities to come together around the shared goal of investing in the next generation.



# SOUTH FLORIDA MENTORING SYMPOSIUM

Welcome to the 2025 South Florida Mentoring Symposium.

What you are witnessing today is not just another event on the calendar — it is the heartbeat of a movement rooted in love, responsibility, and the power of collective impact. This gathering is the embodiment of a vision that we at CLIC have carried close to our hearts: to bring together those who dare to invest in our youth and build an ecosystem of mentoring that stems from the streets of South Florida to the global stage.

The theme of this year’s symposium — “Building a Legacy for Global Impact” — reflects our belief that mentorship is not just a local initiative. It is a global imperative. When we reach a child, we shape a life. And when we shape lives, we influence the world.

Our communities are rich with talent, wisdom, and heart. What we sometimes lack is connection — connection between organizations, between schools and families, between generations, and even within ourselves. That’s why this day matters. It is a call for unity. It is a call to restore the Village — not just as a concept, but as a living, breathing ecosystem that nurtures, guides, and uplifts our young people.

We are proud to be joined today by thought leaders, grassroots warriors, educators, nonprofit trailblazers, and, most importantly, our youth. Each breakout session, keynote, panel, and conversation is designed to spark collaboration, challenge assumptions, and inspire us to take real, measurable action. Because the work does not end here — it begins here.

A special thank you to our sponsors, our host city of Miami Gardens, and Councilwoman Katrina Baskin for believing in our vision. To every mentor, coach, counselor, volunteer, teacher, and advocate in this room — thank you. Your presence today reflects your belief in mentoring being something bigger than yourself.

As we honor those trailblazers who have set the tone for transformative impact, we salute them through the Shirley B. Johnson Excellence in Mentoring Honors. Let us remember: legacies aren’t built in silence. They are forged in moments like these — when people come together with purpose, with passion, and with a promise to pour into the next generation.

Let’s build the Village. Let’s expand our reach. Let’s make mentorship not just something we do — but something we live.

In gratitude, community, and purpose,

Dr. Francis Francois  
Founder & CEO  
Center for Learning Innovation & Change (CLIC)

# MORNING PROGRAM

**8:30 AM - 9:00 AM**  
**Check-in**

**9:00 AM - 9:30 AM**  
**Continental Breakfast**

**9:30 AM - 9:40 AM**  
**Invocation**  
**Pastor Myron Davis**

**9:40 AM - 9:50 AM**  
**Welcome Remarks**  
**Dr. Francis Francois, Founder of CLIC**

**City of Miami Gardens**  
**Councilwoman Katrina Baskin**

**9:50 AM - 10:00 AM**  
**Dr. Francis Francois**

**The Voice of Village**  
**Dr. Manoushka Saintil**  
**Village Vibes Activity**

**10:00 AM - 10:30 AM**  
**Opening Keynote Address**  
**Ruban Roberts, Founder/CEO of RER Consulting &**  
**Amplify Community Resources**

**10:30 AM - 10:45AM**  
**Networking Break**  
**Exhibitor Showcase**

## MEET OUR SPEAKER



Ruban Roberts has dedicated his professional career to the advocacy of mental health and wellness, focusing on serving marginalized communities. With over 18 years of experience as a clinician and Master Trainer at the University of Miami's Brief Strategic Family Therapy Institute (BSFT®), he is a seasoned expert in this field.

In 2013, Ruban founded RER Consulting Enterprise LLC, and later, in 2021, he established Amplify Community Resources. Both organizations are passionately committed to addressing the mental health and wellness challenges faced by underserved populations. Ruban Roberts is also highly skilled in research design and the development of evidence-based programs, which he utilizes to support communities in need. Mr. Roberts's commitment to underserved communities has driven his professional and personal pursuits, leading to over 25 years of devoted service to advocacy and community causes.

This passion is evident in his leadership roles in numerous organizations, including his role as the immediate past President of the Miami-Dade Branch of the NAACP. He has also offered his expertise to various boards and workgroups, including appointments by governmental bodies such as the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners and Florida's former Governor Rick Scott.

Over the years, Mr. Roberts has been a fervent advocate for addressing mental health disparities. He has been associated with initiatives sponsored by notable organizations like the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Further, his dedication to health equity and addiction services reflects his broader commitment to wellness. Educationally, Mr. Roberts refined his expertise at Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida, securing both a Master's in Social Work and Business Administration. On a personal note, he takes great pride in being a devoted husband, a nurturing father, and an enthusiastic traveler, continually seeking to broaden his horizons.

## MEET OUR SPEAKER



An accomplished community leader and business executive, Malika Harrison has 20 years of experience in community relations, volunteerism, social impact, philanthropy, and communications. She has made significant contributions towards early learning, mentoring, women's empowerment, the arts and social justice advocacy. With a background of unique experiences across the corporate and nonprofit sectors, most recently as President of MASH Consulting, Malika led a public relations and communications consultancy. Currently, she serves as the inaugural President and CEO of MENTOR Florida. Previously, she has held various leadership roles at Truist, Orlando Magic, S&P Global and Alcoa.

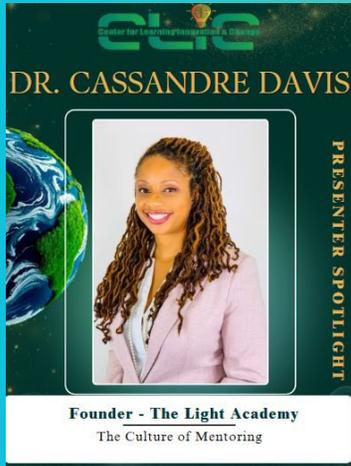
A Florida native, Malika tutors and mentors with Orange County Public Schools. Her leadership-in-service includes Orange County Parks & Recreation – Advisory Board Co-Chair, Heart of Florida United Way - Women United, Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida - Young Professionals, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. An advocate for equality and access to quality education, she has served on the Board of Directors for Early Learning Coalition of Orange County, ELEVATE Orlando, Holocaust Memorial Resources and Education Center of Florida, and United Arts of Central Florida.

For a commitment to service, Malika has been recognized by Volunteer Florida, Association of Fundraising Professionals - Central Florida Chapter and National Diversity Council. She also received a SPORTYS Award for Best in Social Responsibility from Greater Orlando Sports Commission, was named to Orlando Business Journal's 40 Under 40, and selected as Woman of the Year by Florida Diversity Council.

Malika earned a Master of Science in Public Relations and Corporate Communication from New York University, a Bachelor of Science in Journalism from Florida A&M University, and obtained a certificate in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace from the University of South Florida.

# INNOVATION LABS 1

10:45 A.M - 11:45 A.M



**DR. CASSANDRE DAVIS**

**PRESENTER SPOTLIGHT**

**Founder - The Light Academy**  
The Culture of Mentoring

## Birds of Paradise Room

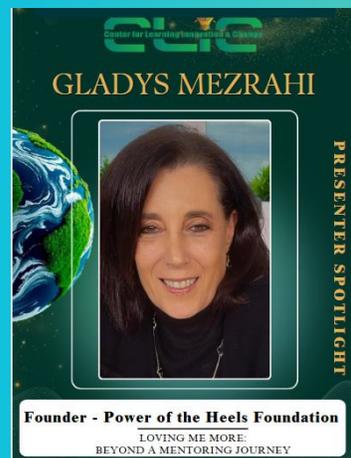
*The Culture of Mentoring*  
Facilitator: *Dr. Cassandra Davis*

Participants will explore how mentors can become culturally responsive by reflecting on their own beliefs, perceptions, and experiences. By understanding the impact of their cultural background, mentors can better connect with students from diverse backgrounds. This self-awareness allows mentors to adapt their approaches, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment. The session will emphasize the importance of recognizing and respecting cultural differences, enabling mentors to guide students in a way that acknowledges and celebrates these differences, ultimately promoting personal and academic growth.

## Palm Room

*Loving Me More -  
Beyond A Mentoring Journey*  
Facilitator: *Gladys Mezrahi*

Participants will engage in a unique dialogue exploring the question: Can we really close the gender and racial gap with mentoring? The answer is a resounding yes—but only if we start early. Real, sustainable change begins when young girls are mentored from a young age, providing them with the tools, confidence, and vision to see beyond limitations. When mentorship is combined with early education and empowerment, we start to shape strong, capable women who are prepared to lead and succeed. We must ensure that these programs are accessible and inclusive, reaching those who need them most. By doing so, we can create a world where every young girl has the chance to realize her full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.



**GLADYS MEZRAHI**

**PRESENTER SPOTLIGHT**

**Founder - Power of the Heels Foundation**  
LOVING ME MORE:  
BEYOND A MENTORING JOURNEY

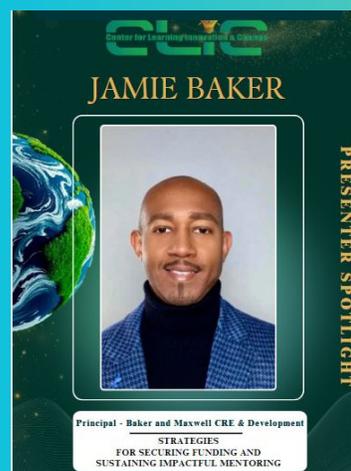
## Gardenia Room

*Funding for Nonprofits - Strategies for securing funding and sustaining impactful mentoring programs*

Facilitator: *Jamie Baker*

Join us for a practical session designed to equip your nonprofit with the tools to find the proper grants, build a funder-ready profile, and create compelling proposals. Discover how AI tools can streamline your search and help align funding opportunities with your mission. You'll leave with actionable insights and real-world examples to help you secure the support needed to advance your foundation's work and impact.

Navigating the funding landscape for non-profit organizations can often feel like a solitary and intricate journey. Many organizations rely on the generosity of friends and family to seed their programs privately. However, expanding your funding sources can significantly impact your organization's ability to grow and serve its mission. Imagine the possibilities if your organization could access local and Federal grants. These grants can provide the vital funding needed to kick-start or expand programs.



**JAMIE BAKER**

**PRESENTER SPOTLIGHT**

**Principal - Baker and Maxwell CRE & Development**  
STRATEGIES  
FOR SECURING FUNDING AND  
SUSTAINING IMPACTFUL MENTORING

# LUNCHEON PROGRAM

11:45 AM - 12:45 PM

**Youth Panel Discussion:  
The Future of Mentoring and Global Impact  
Facilitator: Malika Harrison**

**Malika Harrison will lead an engaging panel discussion featuring youth participants. This dialogue will delve into various themes, including mentorship, leadership, and the global impact of empowering young voices. The panel will offer a platform for youth to express their views on how mentorship can evolve to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world. Youth leaders and mentees will share their experiences, insights, and vision for the future of mentoring.**

**Malika Harrison, President of MENTOR Florida. In this inspiring session, Malika will deliver a message on the transformative power of collaboration and the importance of expanding and strengthening our "Village." She will also lead an engaging discussion with youth leaders and mentees who will share their perspectives on mentorship, leadership, and their vision for global impact. This is a moment to listen, learn, and be inspired by the very voices we aim to uplift.**

**As we conclude this session, we encourage all attendees to reflect on the discussions and consider how they can contribute to building a supportive and inclusive environment for future generations. Let us commit to fostering meaningful connections and opportunities that will help our youth thrive and make a difference globally.**

**Together, we can create a brighter future through mentorship, collaboration, and the collective strength of our "Village."**

# INNOVATION LABS 2

12:45 P.M. - 1:45 P.M

## Birds of Paradise Room

*Strengthening Partnership for the Success of Black Boys Beyond The Village*

*Matthew Pigatt, William “DC” Clark, Gale Nelson, Pierre Rutledge, Mark Francis, Delvin Rogers, Ernest Hardy, Jamell “Mel” Fayson*  
*Facilitator: C. Vernon Martin*

Participants will engage in a solution-focused conversation that brings together respected mentors, educators, and community leaders committed to the growth and empowerment of Black boy. Moderated by C. Vernon Martin of Talk2Me Radio, this session explores the importance of collaboration, culturally relevant support, and re-establishing the “village” as a model of sustainable impact. Participants will share proven strategies, lived experiences and insights to strengthen mentoring ecosystems and ensure that our boys are not only seen but supported, heard, and guided toward their fullest potential.

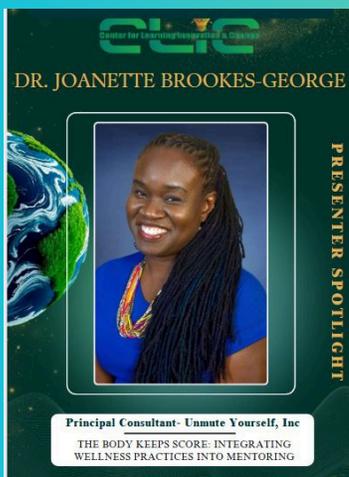


## Palm Room

*The Body Keeps Score: Integrating Wellness Practices into Mentoring*  
*Facilitator: Dr. Joannette Brookes-George*

This robust, interactive workshop, deeply informed by Bessel van der Kolk's "The Body Keeps the Score," addresses vicarious trauma, re-traumatization, and burnout experienced by mentors working with inner-city youth. By prioritizing self-care practices and tangible, memorable activities, participants will gain critical skills for maintaining wellness, emotional balance, and resilience. In the realm of mentorship, the metaphor of "pouring from an empty cup" is all too familiar. As mentors, we often find ourselves so invested in supporting our mentees that we neglect our own needs.

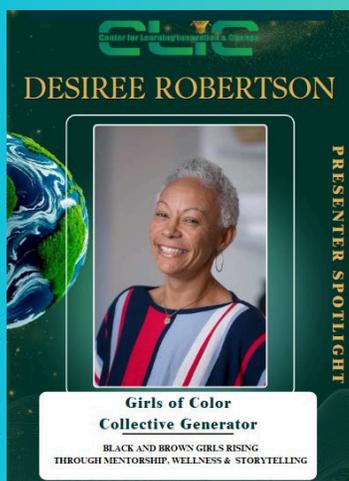
However, self-care is not a luxury—it's a necessity. When you take care of yourself, you set an example for your mentees, teaching them the importance of self-love and balance in their own lives. When mentors overlook self-care, the repercussions can be significant. A single missed meeting due to burnout can quickly turn into a pattern, diminishing the trust and consistency mentees depend on.



## Gardenia Room

*Black and Brown Girls Rising through Mentorship, Wellness and Storytelling*  
*Facilitator: Desiree Robertson*

This session features content from a recently piloted, multi-layered curriculum focused on mentoring black and brown girls. Participants will engage and learn key tips to build positive relationship that support youth belonging through wellness and storytelling activities. Collecting data from mentees can reveal common challenges they face, such as academic struggles, lack of resources, or personal obstacles. This information allows mentors to develop targeted interventions and support systems. By listening to the population we wish to mentor we gain deeper insights into the needs of those we aim to serve.

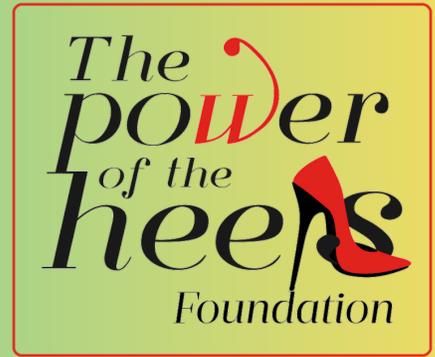


# MEET OUR SPONSORS



BAHER FOUNDATION

Partnering with Families and Communities  
to create a brighter future for children



# LEGACY HONORS

2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

## Shirley B. Johnson Excellence in Mentoring Honors



### In Dedication to Dr. Shirley B. Johnson A Legacy Rooted in Service, Excellence, and the Empowerment of Youth

Dr. Shirley B. Johnson was more than an educator, activist, and leader—she was a living embodiment of excellence in service. A child of the civil rights era, she was deeply inspired by the teachings and courage of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which became the moral compass guiding her decades-long commitment to justice, education, and youth empowerment.

Throughout her life, Dr. Johnson carried an unwavering belief that change begins with action and that every child—regardless of background—deserves an advocate who sees their worth. She stood at the front lines of Miami’s educational and social justice movements, challenging inequity and holding systems accountable. Whether through her role at the United Teachers of Dade or her passionate mentorship of future leaders, Dr. Johnson never wavered in her commitment to pushing others toward their fullest potential.

She lived by example, challenging those around her to do more, give more, and be more. Her life reminds us that excellence is not an act, but a standard—and one that must be upheld especially when it comes to our youth.

The Shirley B. Johnson Excellence in Mentoring Honors bears her name because it carries her spirit. It calls us to serve with integrity, lead with compassion, and invest with urgency. At CLIC, and through this symposium, we honor her by continuing the work she so fiercely championed: building a village that pours into our youth, holds one another accountable, and dares to dream of a more just, empowered future.

“A society that fails to invest in its youth is doomed to fade with its elders”. Dr. Johnson ensured that we would never make that mistake—and for that, we are eternally grateful.

# EXCELLENCE IN MENTORING HONORS

2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Shirley B. Johnson Excellence in Mentoring Luncheon  
Dedication to Shirley B. Johnson's memory,  
honoring non-profit organizations for their outstanding contributions

## *Youth & Leadership Award*

100 Black Men of South Florida  
Pierre Rutledge, President

Mahogany Youth Corporation  
Robert O' Bryant, Community Father

The Sierra Club  
Mark Walters

## *Legacy Builder Award*

The Resource Room  
Ebony Johnson, Executive Director

## *Community Impact Award*

DCS Mentoring  
William "DC" Clark, Founder

Generational Cure  
Charles Williams, CEO

## *Mentoring Through Education Award*

U-Turn Youth Consulting, Inc.  
Shirley Plantin, Chief Executive Consultant

Miles Academy Girls Club  
Jhodi Pommells, Founder

Girls Growing Into Greatness  
Latoya Porter Founder

## *Health & Wellness Through Mentorship Award*

Amplify Community Resources  
Ruban Roberts, Founder & CEO

Reyna Group Homes  
Richard Charlemon, President & CEO



# THANK YOU COUNCILWOMAN KATRINA BASKIN

*Thank  
you!*



The Center for Learning Innovation & Change extends its heartfelt thank you to Councilwoman Katrina Baskin for her unwavering support and belief in our mission. From the very beginning, Councilwoman Baskin recognized the vision of the South Florida Mentoring Symposium and stepped in—not just as a supporter, but as a true partner in progress.

Her commitment to youth empowerment, community collaboration, and the revitalization of the Village mindset has been instrumental in bringing this event to life. Her leadership reminds us that when elected officials lead with heart and purpose, the impact echoes far beyond policy—it reaches families, neighborhoods, and the next generation of leaders.

Councilwoman Katrina Baskin governs with heart and persistence, her impact resonates on multiple levels. The ripple effect of such leadership can be observed as it inspires others to take active roles in their communities. Purposeful governance champions youth empowerment and community collaboration, it serves as a powerful reminder of the positive change that can be achieved when we unite for a common goal. Let us all commit to fostering environments where everyone has the opportunity to flourish, and where the strength of our "Village" propels us forward.

Thank you, Councilwoman Baskin, for standing with us, for championing mentorship, and for showing what's possible when community and leadership unite.

With gratitude,

The CLIC Team



# MEET OUR VENDORS



**MENTOR**  
FLORIDA

# MESSAGE FROM OUR ORGANIZER



When someone entrusts you with a dream, a vision, and a metaphorical "baby," it becomes an honor and a responsibility to nurture it to fruition. My journey began in 2007 when I met Francis through my sister, Wilnide Johnson. At the time, I had just completed my military service, including a combat tour in Iraq, and was eager to embark on a new chapter in my life. The pipe dream of attending college while serving never materialized, but the GI Bill offered me the opportunity to pursue higher education at my own pace. I enrolled at Union Institute & University, where Francis was the Director of Admissions. He became a pivotal figure in my journey.

In 3 years, I earned a Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration, with Francis offering encouragement, challenging my perspectives, and, at times, pushing me to my limits. It was through these experiences that we discovered our familial connection—Francis was like a second cousin by marriage. This revelation only strengthened our bond, which was forged through shared struggles, new agreements, and lively debates. Our relationship became one of unwavering support, love, and admiration.

When Francis approached me about organizing the Symposium, I knew it would be a monumental task. Yet, there was an unspoken understanding that this was a calling. In Romans 12:6, we are reminded to offer our gifts to humanity with joy and excellence, and this event was an opportunity for me to do just that. Over the course of a six months, I dedicated myself to providing the support, organization, and structure needed to bring this vision to life. Today, as we stand on the other side of the vision, I am filled with gratitude for the chance to operate in my gift and serve a purpose greater than myself. This journey has been a testament to the power of trust, collaboration, and dedication. I am thankful to Francis for his trust and to God for guiding us to this moment.

Remember the impact you have on the lives of others. Your encouragement, tenacity, dedication, and commitment are integral to your being. Do not let hurt or lack of recognition deter you. Continue your work with unwavering resolve, for the world—our Immanuel Race—needs you. Keep moving forward, knowing that your contributions are invaluable and that your efforts will inspire and uplift those around you. The rest of your life will be the best of your life!

Dr. Manoushka Saintil  
Annew Way, LLC