

HOPE

Michigan Immigrant Youth Conference

06.24.23 // Calvin University // Grand Rapids

Becoming part of something
truly special. ✨



BECOMING HEALING IDENTITY LIBERTY MONEY

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ABOUT

It is a privilege to invite you to the inaugural Michigan immigrant youth conference. A group of Ethnic Based Community Organizations, refugee and immigrant leaders, allies and supporters of immigrant have come together to host this conference.

The theme for the conference is rooted in the philosophy that young people are the hope for a better future. Young immigrants are the hope for their families, their communities and themselves. It is important to invest in the lives of young immigrants for a hopeful future generation of great character-driven, global minded youth living out their full potential.

The conference will honor the contributions of immigrant youth to Michigan and the United States while recognizing and respecting the unique experience of an immigrant youth!

The conference will provide a safe space to celebrate immigrant youth, support immigrant youth talents and skills, confront key challenges and issues impacting immigrant youth while sharing specific tools and ways to overcome these challenges.

It will provide a safe space to educate, inspire and connect immigrant youth with resources and opportunities to learn about ways to thrive , while casting a vision for young people to learn how they can be active participants in making positive change in their lives and communities.



BECOMING HEALING IDENTITY LIBERTY MONEY

AGENDA

8:30 AM - 9:30 AM



Registration Snacks and Coffee

9:30 AM - 11:00 AM



Kick Off

Main Stage

Performances & Keynote Speakers:

| Ben Cabanaw

| Bing Goegi

| Seydi Sarr

11:15 AM - 12:00 PM



Workshops

Presenters:

| Personal Growth for Immigrant Youth

Room 115

| Education & Skill Development

Room 125

| Mental Health

Room 135

| Legal Rights & Civic Engagement

Room 222

| Financial Literacy

Room 264

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM



Lunch

Commons Dining Hall

1:15 PM - 2:00 PM



Networking

2:15 PM - 3:00 PM



Workshops

Performances & Keynote Speakers:

| Personal Growth for Immigrant Youth

Room 115

| Education & Skill Development

Room 125

| Mental Health

Room 135

| Legal Rights & Civic Engagement

Room 222

| Financial Literacy

Room 264

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM



Welcome Back!

Main Stage

Performances & Keynote Speakers:

| Jane Bruin

| Mitogo Opira

| Machhadie Assi

5:00 PM - 8:00 PM



Dinner

Commons Dining Hall

Special Guest:

| DJ Lyon

WORKSHOPS

Identity: Personal Growth for Immigrant Youth

Room 115

Mirabel Fanyuyei Umenei, Fridah Kanini, Krishna Bista, Sergio Cira-Reyes

This workshop will address how to navigate family and cultural differences as a young immigrant adult. It will address how one finds a sense of self-love and self-actualization from an immigrant background. It will highlight how one navigates being part of multiple cultures and finds strength in this.

Becoming: Education & Skill Development

Room 125

Teera Wilkins

The workshop aims to inspire and motivate immigrant youth to pursue higher education or skill development opportunities. It will focus on educating them about the available opportunities and highlighting their potential benefits in Michigan and the wider country.

Healing: Mental Health

Room 135

Cat Lanting, Shadin Atiyeh

This workshop will explore the definition of mental health and its connection to the well-being for immigrants, Refugees, asylum seekers, and forcibly displaced persons. The workshop will provide psychoeducation and resources for participants to support prevention and access to the mental health services

Liberty: Legal Rights & Civic Engagement

Room 222

Jenny Rosario, Casey Copp

The workshop on legal rights and civic engagement for immigrant youth will emphasize the importance of civic engagement and how it can be used as a tool for advocating for immigrant communities. The workshop will provide resources and support to undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, DACA holders, and more. It will also highlight the legal rights that immigrants have in the United States.

Money: Financial Literacy

Room 264

Odell Palacio, Dondrea Brown

The workshops aim to teach financial literacy and specific skills in money management, banking, saving, and investing to immigrant youth. They will help create personal budgets, track expenses, and make informed decisions about credit, debt, and financial products. The goal is to equip youth with the knowledge to navigate the complexities of the financial system in the country and build a stable financial future.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS





KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Bing Goei, an immigrant to the U.S. in 1960, has for the past 30+ years dedicated his life to be a voice for those whose voice has been taken away. His commitment and passion to justice and equity for all is affirmed by Bing's work in the following initiatives listed below.

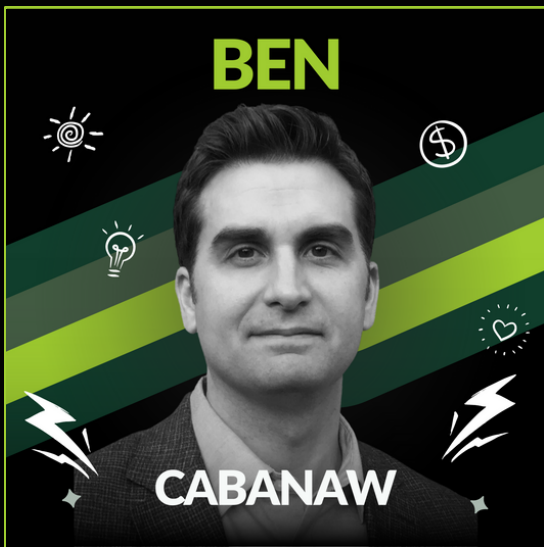
- First Minority Executive Director of a Ministry in the Christian Reformed Church of North America – Synodical Committee on Racial Reconciliation
- Founder and CEO of the International Center for Entrepreneurial Excellence – a program focusing on the success of Minority and Women entrepreneurs.
- Co-Founder of the Multiracial Associations of Professionals – an organization focused on increasing cultural opportunities a growing diverse professional population in GR. One of our major events was bringing in the Alvin Ailey II dance troupe to Grand Rapids.
- Director of the Michigan Office for New Americans – appointed by Governor Rick Snyder to be the first Director of an Agency focused on growing Michigan's economy by using the talents of Michigan constituents represented by the Hispanic Latino Commission, the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission and the Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs.
- Founder of the Grand Rapids International Network, whose Mission Statement is – “United Against the Culture of Exclusion, committed to a Culture of Affirmation and Respect.” Our goal is to make our Region a welcoming region where everyone is provided the opportunity to participate in our growing economy and is represented at every level of civic engagement.
- Bing was awarded the City of GR Champion of Diversity Award by Mayor George Heartwell in 2014.
- Charter Member of the West Michigan Asian American Association
- Served on several National Panels discussing the importance of DE&I



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Jane Bruin serves as the Center for Intercultural Student Development Director at Calvin University. Her practice is rooted in her identity and deep connection to South Asian and West African communities worldwide. She is informed by her lifelong journey traversing diverse global and American contexts as a Nigerian-born Pakistani American immigrant. Jane completed her BA: Biology/Secondary Education from Dordt University and her MA: Missions from Calvin Theological Seminary. She is currently working on her Ph.D. in Industrial and Organization Psychology at Adler University. For the past 20 years, Jane has been working in educational and cross-cultural settings across the globe, including community-based community development in Senegal, teaching Cultural Anthropology, and higher education student affairs.

Her professional and personal experiences drive her research interests in Change Management and the field of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. As an experienced DEI Leader, Practitioner, Educator, and Administrator, her passion is to see systems within the Higher Education and Corporate worlds be built/reconfigured in a way that is intentional about the flourishing of all people, centering the experiences of those who have been historically excluded/underrepresented. One specific research topic that is especially intriguing is examining the racialized experiences of students of color in higher education to create relevant solutions that lower the experiences of tokenization, feelings of disappointment/frustration, and racial battle fatigue. Jane loves spending time with family outside of academics, including her kind, talented, incredibly supportive husband and fantastic son. Her hobbies include cooking, gardening, time at the beach, and camping.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Ben Cabanaw is the Deputy Director for the Office of Global Michigan, Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, and serves as Michigan's State Refugee Coordinator. He was appointed as State Refugee Coordinator in July 2018. Prior to that, Ben served as the manager for the State of Michigan's Office of Refugee Services for over 7 years.

The Office of Global Michigan works to make Michigan welcoming and inclusive, and Ben leads the team's work of Refugee Services, Equity and Inclusion, and the state's ethnic and immigrant commissions. As State Refugee Coordinator, Ben has the responsibility to ensure coordination of all public and private resources for refugee resettlement and integration in the State. Ben has over 20 years of experience in child welfare, prevention programs, benefit assistance, and other social services programs. He has worked in direct field service, as a policy specialist, and in a leadership role across these human services' sectors. Ben is particularly interested in the intersection of immigration and child welfare, as well as innovative, community-based integration practices for immigrant populations. His B.A. is in Sociology, and he holds a Masters in Public Administration/Public Policy.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Rev. Mitogo Tamba Opira is United States Citizen and native of the Democratic Republic of Congo. He lives in United States of America for twenty five years with his family. He moved to United States because of the politic situation in D R Congo and he settled in North Carolina with his family from 1998 t0 2005. He moved to Michigan to attend Calvin Theological Seminary which he graduated with Master of Theological Studies, and in 2011 he graduated also from Grand Valley University with Masters Education Leadership and Master of Education Technology in 2013.

Since 2006, he served and initiated the West Michigan Congolese Community since 2006, which it is main organization of the Congolese live in west Michigan. He is leading the ministries of Global Christians Network Institute and Global Christian Assembly. Rev. Mitogo T. Opira is educator and consultant in education in several African Nations, where every year he travels to lead professional development for school leaders and teachers.

From 2012 to 2017 he was the director for Central Africa Region of the Association of Christian School International.

From 2017 t0 2022 he was and supervisor and manager for Human Resources at JBS Foods International in Plainwell, Michigan and Souderton, Pennsylvania.

He teaches theologies in Gabon and Democratic republic of Congo. Currently he is representing the Pedagogical University of Congo in the continents of America.

Rev. Mitogo Opira dedicates his life to serve the people around the world and prepare a generation of leaders especially in Africa. Therefore, since 2020 the ministries of Global Christian launches the vision 20-30 in which it intentionally wants to develop the rural areas by training teachers and youth of these areas.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Award-winning social justice advocate Seydi Sarr is a curator of equitable practices through lived experiences. A Senegalese native, she is Helmswomxn at the African Bureau for Immigration & Social Affairs (ABISA) & co-founder of the Black Immigrant Bail Fund (BIBF).

Seydi is a Michigan State commissioner in her current term with the Black Leadership Advisory Council (BLAC). Her passion for social equity drives her commitment to advocacy at the intersections of racial, immigration, socio-economy, religious, and gender issues. Seydi curates the vision of a multicultural, multifaceted society built on acknowledgment, understanding, courage, transformation, and service. Seydi teaches weekly West African dance classes and performs annually with the Maimouna Keita School of African Dance.

Seydi is a court interpreter, an alumna of Detroit Equity Action Lab, Michigan Political Leadership Program, and New American Leaders.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Veneshia Cezil received her undergraduate degree from Oakwood College in 2005, now Oakwood University, and her law degree from Thomas M. Cooley Law School in 2008. Shortly after graduating from Law School, she became licensed in both Illinois and Michigan.

In 2010 she joined the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office's General Trials Division, prosecuting several hundred cases that included assaultive crimes, larcenies, drug crimes, armed robberies, homicides, motor vehicle crimes, and high profile/media cases. As a direct result of her diligent prosecutions in the General Trials Division, she was specially assigned to the Sexual Assault Unit.

During her time in the Sexual Assault Unit, Cezil was assigned to vertically prosecute very difficult cases. The prosecutions of these cases included, but were not limited to, charging decisions, handling preliminary examinations, and litigating numerous trials. Many of the cases involved DNA evidence, serial rapist suspects, and media attention. Despite the complexity of those assignments, she always rose to the occasion and empowered victims to face their attackers with the primary goal of giving survivors a voice.

Since joining the Attorney General's Office in 2015, Cezil has continued to give hundreds of children a voice by representing the Department of Health and Human Services in Child Abuse and Neglect proceedings, zealously advocating on their behalf to achieve reunification while ensuring that her actions always promote children's safety and are in their best interest. She has also served as one of the Department's Bureau Chiefs and currently serves as Chief of Operations and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer.

Cezil immigrated from Jamaica to the United States with her mother as an infant. She became a U.S. citizen in 2020 and remains passionate about serving her community through mentoring young people and self-empowerment initiatives



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Micho was born and raised in Lebanon and immigrated to the USA at 18; she resides in Michigan with her 3 kids Gabriel, Valentina and Laya. Micho is proud of her Arab-American heritage, and constantly strives to play a key role in building bridges and fostering the diversity and inclusion within Arab American communities and community allies. She is a difference maker, and an inspiration to many Arab-American women who know her. She is deeply involved in empowering women of color and mobilizing new American voters by partnering with local and national nonprofit organizations. Micho's passion for community service and engagement stems from her own immigrant story, and she believes that diversity, equity, and inclusion are integral to her career path.

Micho's career began at the University of Michigan Dearborn -Criminal Justice Department, then a paralegal at the Washtenaw County Public Defender's Office in Ann Arbor. Her commitment to justice and equality led her to the Michigan Attorney General's Office as a victim advocate on the Flint case, criminal prosecution team. Micho's passion for her community to have a voice in the political landscape led her to work and lead several political campaigns locally and statewide, where she honed her skills in grassroots organizing and community outreach. Today, Micho works at the Michigan Democratic Caucus, Communication Department, under the leadership of Speaker of the House Joe Tate.

As a strong advocate for voter engagement and political participation, Micho believes that Naturalized citizens must be civically engaged and must play an active role in political life because they have a unique perspective and experience that can contribute to the political discourse of their communities.

PRESENTERS





PRESENTER

Mirabel Fonyuy Umenei, professionally known as Myra Maimoh, is a talented artist, chef, and entrepreneur hailing from Cameroon. With a strong foundation in studio work and a steadfast commitment to professionalism, Myra's artistic journey began at the tender age of three, showcasing her singing and dancing talents. Throughout her career, whether as part of girl bands or as a solo performer, Myra has consistently captivated audiences with her musical prowess and natural ability to command attention.

Before embarking on her academic pursuits in 2005, Myra was a highly sought-after studio vocalist in Cameroon, collaborating with renowned artists and radio stations, and recording in some of the country's most prestigious studios. Her reputation as one of the most in-demand vocalists in the industry was a testament to her exceptional talent and dedication.

Driven by her passion for empowering immigrant women, creatives, and businesses, both in the United States and Africa, Mirabel F. Umenei actively works towards strengthening existing business structures and facilitating the establishment of new ventures. She is deeply committed to equipping businesses with the necessary tools and skills to thrive on the global stage.

Myra Maimoh's multifaceted background, coupled with her unwavering work ethic, has positioned her as a respected figure in the arts and entrepreneurial communities. Her pursuit of excellence and her ability to seamlessly navigate between her artistic and culinary passions have solidified her reputation as a versatile and accomplished professional.

Connect with Mirabel F. Umenei to explore her artistic endeavors, entrepreneurial ventures, and her advocacy for empowering women and creatives. Her dedication to uplifting others and fostering growth serves as an inspiration to aspiring artists and entrepreneurs worldwide.



PRESENTER

As a college navigator, Teera Wilkins works with Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRCC) students from elementary school students to high school students, sharing information about GRCC and helping those interested in attending find the support and resources to enroll and be successful.

She mentors GRCC students along their educational journey to assist them in reaching their academic goals -- whether they plan to step into a career, or transfer to a four-year college or university. Teera also leads a peer-to-peer program -- Raider Guide -- to connect experienced GRCC students with newly enrolled classmates to encourage and help them adjust to the college experience. She also is a member of the Promise Zone team, providing city students interested in GRCC with information and resources to help them pay for college. Those resources include the Grand Rapids Promise Zone Scholarship, GRCC Foundation scholarships, and grants and low-interest loans from Federal Financial Aid.

Teera graduated from Grand Rapids Public Schools and participated in the GRCC Upward Bound program as a high school student. She worked as a Summer Residential staff member for GRCC and Upward Bound after graduating. She continued her education at Tennessee State University where she earned a bachelor's degree in Biology. Teera's interest in science and the medical field led her to work at Vanderbilt University Medical Center for 10 years until she discovered her passion for working with underserved students and helping them reach their education potential. Teera said she enjoys watching students flourish into prosperous and motivated Raiders who know they belong at GRCC. "I'm committed to exposing students to the endless opportunities high education has to offer," she said.

Connect with Teera and other members of the Student Affairs team to learn how GRCC is your best choice for pursuing your academic or professional goals. You can reach out through email at teerawilkins@grcc.edu or by phone at (616) 234-2551.



PRESENTER

While volunteering at Justice For Our Neighbors with her husband and children, Jenny fell in love with the mission of the organization. She joined the team in 2020 and serves as Legal Co-Director.

Jenny's experience has included various areas of immigration law, but her primary focus area has been humanitarian work: representing and advocating for unaccompanied minors; survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault; and human trafficking. Jenny is a graduate of the University of Cincinnati College of Law.

"The legal process of immigration can be expensive, overwhelming, and complicated. At JFON I have the opportunity to advocate for our most vulnerable populations while affirming their inherent worth, dignity, and value."



PRESENTER

Catherine (Cat) started at the Foundation as an AmeriCorps member in 2011. With her passion for the be nice.action plan, and belief that four simple steps can change someone's hour, their day, and/or their life, she has stepped into the role of Program Director. Seeing its potential and setting goals for be nice.programming to be accessible to any individual is her priority, but instructing all of the MHF's offered programs (including the be nice.action plan to kindergartners through senior citizens, be nice.extension, Mental Health First Aid, and QPR) is still where she finds much joy.

Cat is a native Grand Rapidsian who graduated from Michigan State University with a BS in Interdisciplinary Studies - Health Studies and is so excited to be educating young people and the community about a topic that she needed information about in her own youth.

She currently resides on the lakeshore, and in her free time, Cat skis, feeds chickens, races sailboats, and hikes the North Country Trail with her family and 3 canines to protect her mental health.



PRESENTER

Fridah is the founder and CEO of A Glimpse of Africa and the owner of a small business name, Flora's Elegance Event's Décor. Fridah also currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors at SowHope, a youth leader at the African Community Fellowship church, and a community connector at the Amani program at Treetops.

In 2013 Fridah founded the West Michigan Kenyan community where she served as the president until 2016. Fridah sits on the committee for covenant park.

Fridah is an immigrant from Kenya, a USA citizen who calls West Michigan home. She was born and raised in Kenya, moved to the United States in 2001, and later moved to the United Kingdom between 2002 and 2004. Fridah has lived, studied, and worked in the UK, USA, and Kenya.

What keeps her going is her passion to serve others, her faith in God, and the love of the wonderful people in her life. Her values, compassion, and love to serve others and her community are inspired by her late mother, Ms. Flora who is her role model

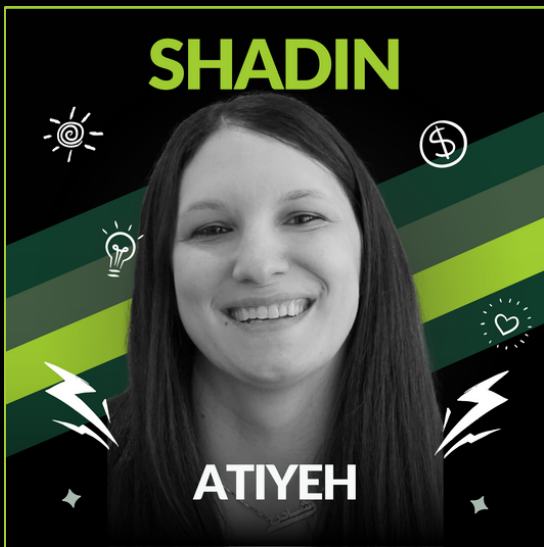


PRESENTER

Odell Palacio is currently serving as the Microenterprise Development Coordinator at Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County and is Cofounder at Trust Clean, a Commercial and Residential Cleaning Company based out of Ypsilanti, MI.

Odell has 10 years serving in the retail banking space in various positions. Odell has worked as a Relationship Manager and in the Financial Advisor Development Program at Bank of America Merrill Lynch. Odell was also on the management team at J.P. Morgan Chase Bank in Northville, MI.

Odell is a husband and father of four sons, ages ranging from 4 – 25. Odell's favorite moments are being on the water up north in Traverse City with his family and coaching his son's at basketball and football (strength and conditioning).



PRESENTER

Shadin Atiyeh is a doctoral level Licensed Professional Counselor who serves as a clinical therapist, supervisor, and the Employment & Economic Empowerment Programs Director. She also serves at Wayne State University as Assistant Professor of Teaching in the Counselor Education Department. She is a National Certified Counselor, Approved Clinical Supervisor, Certified Career Counselor, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, and Certified EMDR Therapist.

She holds a Bachelor's degree from University of Michigan in both Psychology and Arab studies; a Master's degree in Community Counseling from Eastern Michigan University, and a PhD in Counselor Education & Supervision from Walden University. She works with children, adults, and families on a broad spectrum of issues; including trauma, depression, anxiety, stress, isolation, cultural issues, and career development.

She has experience working in various community agencies serving survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, immigrants and refugees, abused and neglected children, and homeless families.



PRESENTER

My name is Krishna Bista and I am originally from Bhutan. I came to the United States towards the end of 2008. In 2007, before coming to the U.S. I completed my teacher's training program and I also went to GRCC for two years after arriving here. I am a Certified Marketplace Health Insurance, DPP, Nepali Interpreter, and Community Health Worker for WMAAA.

I live with my wife, daughter, and son, who were both born in the U.S. In my spare time, I enjoy watching movies, biking, going on a walk with my kids and cousins, and just spending time with my family and friends.

I am passionate about refugee and immigrant communities and am always looking to find ways for meaningful integration in their new homes in America. As a refugee myself, I know the struggles of navigating resources to fully participate in a new community. I am particularly interested in addressing behavioral health issues amongst new Americans.

My experience leading teams and organizing events and programs has prepared me to take on the important role of a collective care specialist. I have had the opportunity to plan and coordinate programs and activities with various communities in West Michigan. I use data to inform my decision-making and create impactful strategies and programs that have positive outcomes.



PRESENTER

Dondrea Brown has dedicated his life to transforming how people perceive and interact with money.

With a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a master's degree in Arts of Teaching and Curriculum Instruction from Kent State University, Dondrea combines his deep understanding of social systems and policies with his expertise in educational theory to deliver impactful financial education. As an NFEC Certified Financial Education Instructor and the Executive Director of 1428 Financial Wellness and Young Money Finances (YMF), he empowers youth and families to cultivate healthy relationships with money and utilize healthy strategies through high-impact workshops, tools, and resources.

Dondrea's comprehensive approach covers a wide range of financial topics, from basic money management to credit/debt management and investing, resulting in individuals paying off debt, increasing income, purchasing homes, investing, improving credit scores, achieving realistic financial goals, and fostering financial literacy in future generations.



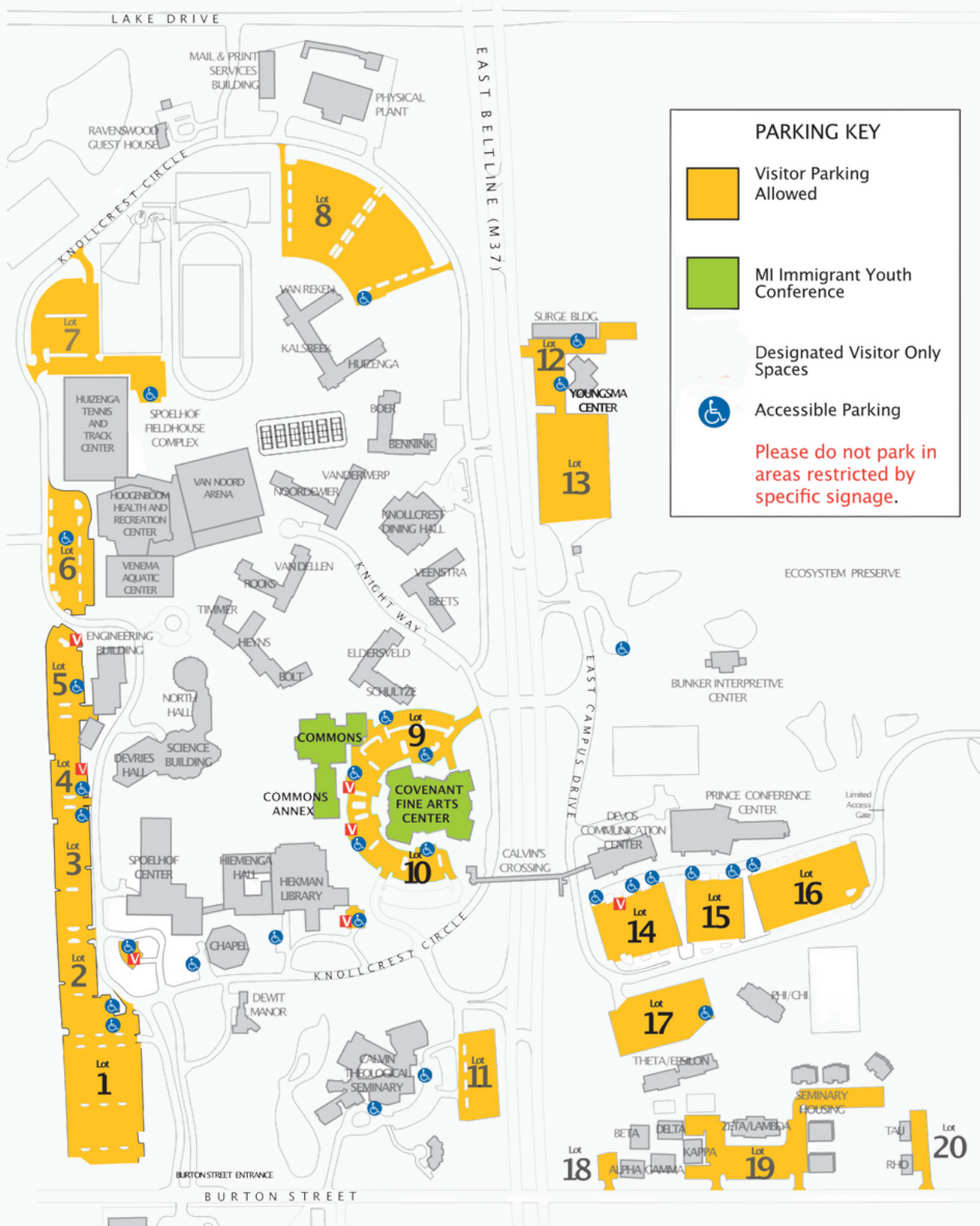
PRESENTER

Sergio Cira-Reyes' family immigrated to Los Angeles from Mexico in search of a better life.

Coming of age as an undocumented immigrant was a formative experience which shaped his life work at the Latino Community Coalition, the Latino Network, Latino Outdoors GR and as captain of the MLK Team with the Champs League.

Sergio currently serves as the Climate Justice Catalyst at the Urban Core Collective. He firmly believes that his most important and impactful work will be as a father of 2.

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