



## Our Panelists

**Erasma Beras-Monticciolo** is an activist, co-founder and Executive Director of Power of Two, a home visiting organization that nurtures the inherent potential in every child and family--equipping them with the tools to transform their own lives and strengthen their communities.

Erasma holds a B.A. in Psychology and Criminal Justice from St. John's University and an MPA from NYU Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Policy. Before joining Power of Two, Erasma's work has taken her to remote areas in Guatemala where she partnered with local entrepreneurs to create a small business cooperative designed to help indigenous communities establish independent, sustainable businesses that improved their living conditions and stimulated their local economies. More locally, in her hometown of New York City, Erasma has spent the last fifteen years successfully establishing relationships with policymakers, community-based organizations, and social change groups to create partnerships and build support for a variety of programs serving our most vulnerable populations in New York City. Erasma is a big believer in healing-informed practice, and she approaches all of her work with that framework in mind. Erasma also serves on the board for the New York Zero to Three Network (NYZTT) and the Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). She is also a 2019 Promising Ventures Fellow and a 2020 Aspen Institute Healthy Communities Fellow.

**Dale Margolin Cecka** the author of a 49-page law review article entitled "Abolish Anonymous Reporting to Child Abuse Hotlines" our subject for this evening.

Dale was a clinical professor of law and the founder and director of the Jeanette Lipman Family Law Clinic at the University of Richmond School of Law. A graduate of Stanford University and Columbia University School of Law, Professor Cecka (Check-ka) is a member of the Georgia State Bar, Virginia State Bar and the New York State Bar. Her scholarship has appeared in Catholic University Law Review, South Carolina Law Review, and West Virginia Law Review, among others, and she was a contributor to the book: Feminist Judgments: Rewritten Opinions of the United States Supreme Court,

published by Cambridge University Press in 2016. Professor Cecka is the lead author of the treatise Family Law: Theory and Practice for 2018, 2019, and 2020 editions. Professor Cecka was a recipient of a prestigious Skadden Fellowship and formerly served on the board of directors of the Virginia State Bar Section on the Education of Lawyers.

In addition, Dale served as a law guardian for the Juvenile Rights Division of the Legal Aid Society as a Skadden Fellow Staff Attorney from 2004-6. Dale was also the NY Interim Director and Clinical Teaching fellow at St. John's University School of Law's Child Advocacy Clinic. Dale and her husband, Rich, are the proud parents of three children, two of whom are adopted. They are also former foster parents.

**Sarah Gerstenzang, L.C.S.W.,** works as a therapist with foster and adoptive families. Sarah is the board president of the Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of NY (AFFCNY) and is on numerous advisory committees including Fostering Families Today magazine and the Effects of Early Life Adversity on Brain Development (NIMH grant with Nim Tottenham, Ph.D. at Columbia University). Additionally, she was a curriculum reviewer for TAC (the first soon-to-be credentialed adoption curriculum for mental health professionals in the United States; also listed on the California Evidenced-Based Clearinghouse) as well as an advisory committee member on the National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative.

She was formerly the Executive Director of AFFCNY, the Associate Director of AdoptUsKids, and a Senior Policy Analyst at Children's Rights. She holds a master's degree in social work from Columbia University. Her child welfare policy and practice experience includes research and publication (including Another Mother: Co-Parenting with the Foster Care System) on a range of foster care and adoption issues as well as presentations at national and international conferences.

Sarah has been a foster and kinship parent and one of her three children was adopted from the New York City foster care system. She and her husband consider two additional siblings who were also in the foster care system and are now grown as part of their family as well.

**Joyce McMillan** is a thought leader. An advocate. An activist. A community organizer. An educator. Her mission is to remove systemic barriers in communities of color by bringing awareness to the racial disparities in systems where people of color are disproportionately affected. Joyce believes the conversation about systemic oppression must happen on all levels consistently before meaningful change can occur. She completed a restorative certificate program at the New School and believes change will not happen independently of healing. Her ultimate goal is to abolish systems of harm while creating concrete community resources.

Joyce leads child welfare family engagement and advocacy efforts at macforfamilies. Prior, she was the Program Director at Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP) where she created a community space to educate the community about restorative practices to empower, affirm, transform and heal communities of color that have been traumatized by systemic injustices, and particularly systemic injustices perpetuated by the Child Welfare system. Joyce is a fellow at the Center for New York City Affairs at the New School for Social Research, doing child welfare work. Joyce and jmacforfamilies.com is also the

Founder of P.L.A.N the Parent Legislative Action Network. PLAN is a coalition of parents directly impacted by the child welfare system, attorneys, social workers, and academia that are committed to reducing, and eventually ending, the child welfare system's harms and transforming the way society supports families. Joyce will be starting her own pod-cast in the very near future.

**Mathylde Frontus** is a member of the New York State Assembly, representing the 46th district since 2018.

She is a Democrat. The district includes portions of southern Brooklyn, including Coney Island, Brighton Beach, Bay Ridge, and Dyker Heights. Prior to elected office Frontus was well known as a community organizer in southwestern Brooklyn, including as the founder of Urban Neighborhood Services. She received the Characters Unite Award from NBCUniversal for that work in 2014.<sup>1</sup> She is a graduate of New York University, Teachers College, Columbia University (Ph.D.) and Harvard Divinity School. Frontus is of Haitian descent.

**Janet Stephens** is a foster and adoptive mother from Queens, New York.

She is a longtime active member of Share Parent Support Group, a parent led foster/adoptive parent support and advocacy group in Queens. Janet is an active advocate who strongly believes that it is important for foster and adoptive parents to be active in their agency, state, national foster parent associations and other venues offering information and resources.