



## Lauren Ruffin



I've spent the better part of two decades leading organizations that sit at the edges of what's expected — a national arts nonprofit with 75,000 members, a worker-owned cooperative, an innovation campus in Detroit, a university futures lab. The through-line is less about the sector and more about the work itself: building distributed teams, managing complex budgets, navigating the gap between what institutions say they value and what they actually do, and figuring out how to make things run well in places that don't always have a playbook. I hold a J.D. from Howard University School of Law and a degree in Political Science from Mount Holyoke College, and I've carried both into a career that has moved fluidly between nonprofit administration, consulting, government affairs, and the classroom.

Right now I'm particularly interested in how emerging technologies — virtual and augmented reality, conversational AI, immersive media — change the way people navigate the world, access public spaces, and tell their own stories. As a Lewis Latimer Fellow through the Edison Awards program, I'm exploring how communities can shape and leverage AI technologies on their own terms. That question — who gets to design the tools, and for whom — runs through most of what I do. I'm based in Michigan, available for consulting engagements, speaking, and select leadership roles, and I'm always interested in talking to people doing work that doesn't fit neatly into a box.

When I'm not working, you'll find me hiking, biking, building (admittedly bad) furniture, planning a trip, or cheering on underdog basketball teams. I currently serve on the governing board of Black Innovation Alliance and have previously served on the boards of Main Street Phoenix Project and Black Girls Code.

*Lauren will be speaking in Seattle during the MOMENTUM convening on July 25, 2026.*

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