

Evidence to Action Series

Using Data for Justice: How Changemakers Can Center Racial Equity in COVID-19 Recovery

Speaker Biographies

Shena Ashley, a vice president at the Urban Institute, has expanded the Center on Nonprofit and Philanthropy's policy research and programmatic initiatives through visionary leadership and strong financial management while maintaining an active portfolio of rigorous academic scholarship. For more than 20 years, the center has been a critical resource for credible, nonpartisan, and accessible data and insights on nonprofit and philanthropic activity in society. In addition to policy research, the center provides technical assistance and philanthropic advisory services to advance more effective and equitable nonprofit and philanthropic practice. Before joining Urban, Ashley held academic positions in the Department of Public Administration and International Affairs in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University and in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University, where she taught courses on the nonprofit sector and quantitative research methods and advanced a research agenda focused on grantmaking effectiveness and nonprofit management. At the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Atlanta Civic Site, Ashley was director of research and policy and developed innovative tools for community engagement in performance measurement.

Kelly Jin is incoming vice president of community and national initiatives for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. There she will oversee investments in public spaces, smart cities, and economic opportunity in 26 communities. Jin previously served as chief analytics officer and director of the Mayor's Office of Data Analytics for the City of New York, where she led a team delivering insights for a more equitable and efficient New York City. She developed and launched the NYC Recovery Data Partnership, a first-of-its-kind effort for community, nonprofit, and private organizations to share data with the city to aid COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Jin also served as cochair of the New York City Automated Decision Systems Task Force, which led to the creation of the first algorithms officer role in local government. Before that, she served as director at the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, where she scouted data-driven investments to support effective state and local government policymaking and operations priorities. During the Obama administration, she was a policy adviser to the US chief technology officer and US chief data scientist in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. In her earlier career, she served in advisory roles in the White House Domestic Policy Council and the US General Services Administration and as a management consultant assisting governments in strategic planning, process improvement, and change management. She also built and co-led the City of Boston's Analytics Team. Jin earned her bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Pennsylvania.

Michael McAfee is president and CEO of PolicyLink, a national research and action institute focused on advancing racial and economic equity. He brings more than 20 years of leadership experience, partnering with organizations across the public, philanthropic, and private sectors to realize this vision. During his time at PolicyLink, McAfee has played a leadership role in securing Promise Neighborhoods as a permanent federal program, led efforts to improve outcomes for more than 300,000 children, and facilitated the investment of billions of dollars in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. He is the catalyst for a new and growing body of work on corporate racial equity, including the first comprehensive tool to guide private-sector companies in assessing and actively promoting equity in all aspects of their value chains. McAfee is

also building a coordinated, sustained campaign that frees America's democracy from the oppressive blend of patriarchy, capitalism, and racism. Before joining PolicyLink, he served as senior community planning and development representative in the Chicago Regional Office of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. McAfee completed Harvard University's executive program in public management and earned his doctoral degree in human and organizational learning from the George Washington University.

Candace Moore was appointed by Mayor Lori Lightfoot as the City of Chicago's first chief equity officer. Charged with leading the new Office of Equity and Racial Justice, Moore has been tasked with advancing policies and practices that promote equitable outcomes across city services and resources. Before this, she advocated for educational equity through a lens of racial and social justice at the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, where she was instrumental in their relaunch of the Educational Equity Project. As a next-generation civil rights advocate, she believes it is imperative to work with community-based advocates and institutional policymakers to achieve sustainable and meaningful solutions. Having served in roles including a case manager for adults with disabilities at the Association for Individual Development and community education manager at the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence, Moore is intentional in her work and an unrelenting agent of change. She is an alumna of the inaugural Surge Fellowship cohort and the Shriver Center on Poverty Law's inaugural class of the Racial Justice Institute. Moore graduated from both Loyola University Chicago's undergraduate program and School of Law.

Alonzo Plough joined the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as chief science officer and vice president, Research-Evaluation-Learning, in January 2014. He is responsible for aligning all of the foundation's work with best evidence from research and practice and incorporating program evaluations into organizational learning. He also oversees the two grantmaking portfolios focused on innovation and emerging issues: Pioneer and Global Ideas for US Solutions. Plough has been a national leader in public health practice for more than 25 years. He is currently clinical professor of health services at the University of Washington School of Public Health in Seattle. Plough earned doctoral and master's degrees at Cornell University and a master's degree at Yale University School of Medicine.

Sarah Rosen Wartell is the third president of the Urban Institute since it was founded in 1968. During her tenure, Urban has "elevated the debate" by bringing more of its insights from research to federal, state, and local government and practice; becoming a leader in research communications and data visualization; and undertaking an ambitious program of business systems and technology modernization. Previously, Wartell was deputy assistant to the president for economic policy and deputy director of the National Economic Council. At the US Department of Housing and Urban Development from 1993 to 1998, she advised the federal housing commissioner on housing finance, mortgage markets, and consumer protection. Later, she was a consultant to the bipartisan Millennial Housing Commission. After government service, Wartell was the founding chief operating officer and then executive vice president of the Center for American Progress. Before her tenure in government, she practiced law with the Washington, DC, firm Arnold & Porter. Wartell serves on the board of the Center for Law and Social Policy and on Bank of America's National Community Advisory Council. She previously served on the boards of the Low Income Investment Fund, the Center for Urban Science and Progress at New York University, and the Corporation for Enterprise Development. Her areas of expertise include community development, consumer finance, asset building, and housing finance. Wartell has a bachelor's degree with honors in urban affairs from the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs and a doctoral degree from Yale Law School.