

## GIVING INNOVATION SUMMIT: MOBILIZING MORE GIVERS AND NEW FORMS OF PHILANTHROPIC CAPITAL

### Speaker Biographies



**Shena Ashley** is director of the Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy at the Urban Institute. She uses research to help nonprofits, governments, and foundations achieve outcomes that contribute to healthy, thriving, equitable, inclusive, and connected communities. Her work combines academia and practice with a strong orientation toward community-engaged scholarship. Her research focuses on grantmaking effectiveness and nonprofit management and has been published in several journals, including *Public Administration Review*, *Administration & Society*, *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, *New Directions for Evaluation*, and *American Review of Public Administration*. Before joining Urban, Ashley was an assistant professor in the Department of Public Administration and International Affairs in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at

Syracuse University. She taught graduate courses on the nonprofit sector and on quantitative research methods. Before that, Ashley was director of research and policy at the Annie E. Casey Foundation Atlanta Civic Site. She led the performance tracking and evaluation activities of a major place-based community change initiative that integrated workforce development, education reform, and housing stabilization to provide opportunities for vulnerable families living in five of Atlanta’s most distressed neighborhoods. She received her BS in agricultural business from Tennessee State University, MS in public policy from the University of Michigan, and PhD in public policy from Georgia State University and the Georgia Institute of Technology.



**Ann Wheatley Canela**, is vice president at Global Impact. She brings expertise in fundraising and marketing to business advisory clients, including Hilton Worldwide, Cisco, Accenture, and Grainger. Canela is a senior adviser for the Global Health Council and the Hilton Prize Coalition. She is also on the board of advisers for World Vision’s “Strong Women, Strong World” initiative and for the Open Road Alliance’s “The Commons,” focused on risk reduction in philanthropy. In her previous role as director of marketing and communications at Global Impact, Canela led the marketing for the Combined Federal Campaign of the National Capital Area and the Combined Federal Campaign–Overseas, raising more than \$80 million a year. Additionally, she led marketing efforts to support fundraising

campaigns for more than 60 leading international charities, raising more than \$20 million a year. Canela previously owned and operated a boutique public relations agency in Chicago, focused on creating partnerships with major retail brands and major metropolitan communities. She has a BA from Hunter College and a certificate in professional fundraising from Boston University.



**Ebonie Johnson Cooper** is the principal consultant of Friends of Ebonie LLC and founder of the Young, Black & Giving Back Institute. Cooper uses her research, thought leadership, and expertise on young black philanthropy to be a bridge connecting civically engaged black millennials and nonprofit organizations. In 2013, Cooper released groundbreaking research as a New York University scholar entitled *African American Millennials: Discovering the Next Generation of Black Philanthropy for the Effective Communication of Nonprofit Organizations*. Her leadership as a black millennial leader has been featured in *Essence*, *Jet*, the *Washington Post*, *Huffington Post Impact*, *Forbes*, and *Policy Mic*. She is also an adjunct professor at Georgetown University and course facilitator at General Assembly DC. She holds a BA in business administration from North Carolina

Agricultural and Technical State University and an MA in public relations and corporate communication from New York University.



**Solomon Greene** is a senior fellow in the Center on International Development and Governance and the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute. His research focuses on how land-use and housing policy can improve access to opportunity for vulnerable groups and how data and technology can support more inclusive urban development. Before joining Urban, Greene was a senior adviser at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), where he helped develop a new federal regulation to reduce residential segregation and promote regional housing opportunities. He was also HUD's principal adviser on the United Nations process for setting global sustainable development goals. Before that, Greene was a senior program officer at the Open Society Foundations, where he managed the foundation's grants and

programs on affordable housing, community development, and fair access to credit. He also launched and led the Neighborhood Stabilization Initiative, the nation's first and largest philanthropic initiative to address the impacts of the foreclosure crisis on low-income communities. Greene has been a law fellow, an adjunct professor, a law clerk, and a litigation associate. He serves on the board of the National Housing Law Project and has served on the board of the Neighborhood Funders Group. Greene received his BA from Stanford University, his MCP from the University of California, Berkeley, and his JD from Yale Law School.



**Hali Lee** is the founder of the Asian Women Giving Circle, which raises resources to support Asian American women using the arts to bring about progressive social change in their communities. In 11 years, the circle has made grants of nearly \$800,000 in support of over 70 projects. Recently, Hali and her Giving Circle sisters started Faces of Giving, which aims to build philanthropy in diverse communities via philanthropic advising and giving circles. She graduated from Princeton University, studied Buddhism at Mahidol University in Bangkok, Thailand, and received an MSW from New York University.



**Dale Nirvani Pfeifer** is on a mission to make social media a global force for good. Her company, GoodWorld, makes charitable giving on social media simple, viral, and secure. GoodWorld works with over 2,500 of the world’s top charities and was recently named one of the fastest-growing companies in DC and one of the world’s most innovative companies by *Fast Company* magazine. Previously, Pfeifer ran Victoria University’s Center for the Study of Leadership in New Zealand. She was named New Zealand Woman of the Year in 2016, one of Trending 40’s New Power Women of DC Tech, and one of the *Washington Business Journal’s* 40 Under 40.



**Melinda Rolfs** is senior director for data and analytics at the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth. She leads the data philanthropy program, which leverages Mastercard data and expertise to promote inclusive growth. Before joining the center, she was with Mastercard Advisors, where she spearheaded the successful launch of Mastercard Sector Insights, a data-driven report for financial institutions and merchants that provides weekly insights on consumer spending by sector. More recently, she launched the center’s first data offering, Donation Insights, the winning concept for the 2015 Advanced Analytics Innovation Forum. Before joining Mastercard, Rolfs spent 14 years as an equity research analyst responsible for investment recommendations for various consumer-related sectors. She has been a guest speaker for graduate and undergraduate finance classes and holds a BS in marketing from Juniata College and a Certified Public Accountant title.



**Stefanie A. Thomas** joined the Impact America team in 2015 with notable impact-investing experience that includes fundraising and advisory board management, as well as founder technical support and new investment sourcing. As a member of Impact America, Thomas has emerged as a voice of “Black Women VCs” (*Fast Company*) who work at the intersection of founder diversity, technology for impact, and the deployment of capital within untapped markets. Since 2013, Thomas’s work has centered around her passion to support underresourced entrepreneurs. Some of the inspired work that has resulted from Thomas’s deep-rooted influences includes cofounding a female-centered entrepreneurship organization called Women Who Launch and traveling across the United States to work with small businesses, landing her a feature on HLN’s “Growing America” series. Before shifting gears professionally, Thomas was a vice president at Citigroup, managing more than 50 institutional investor relationships and leading finance transactions totaling over \$1 billion in assets. Thomas received her BS in economics from the Whatron School of the University of Pennsylvania and her MBA from the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan.



**Gustavo Velasquez** is director of the Urban Institute's Washington-Area Research Initiative, a cross-center initiative and multidisciplinary program of evidence and policy analysis focused on the national capital region. Urban's Washington-Area Research Initiative provides insights from research to policymakers and practitioners in ways both relevant and actionable. Velasquez served for nearly three years as assistant secretary for fair housing and equal opportunity at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). He served on behalf of the president as the strategic lead of the fair housing and inclusive community agenda for the Obama administration. During his tenure, HUD achieved groundbreaking enforcement victories in fair lending and in major housing discrimination cases. Velasquez led efforts to promulgate the landmark

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule, a key tool for cities, states, and other HUD funding recipients to reduce inequality and disparities in access to opportunity. Velasquez worked in executive roles in the administrations of DC mayors Anthony Williams, Adrian Fenty, and Vincent Gray. He also has nonprofit experience as executive director of the Latino Economic Development Center, a local community development organization in Washington, DC, and Congreso de Latinos Unidos, the leading social service provider to Latinos in Philadelphia. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a master's degree in public administration.



**Sarah Rosen Wartell** became president of the Urban Institute in 2012 and is the third president since Urban was founded in 1968. During her tenure, Urban has articulated its strategy to "elevate the debate" by bringing more of its research insights 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. After government service, Wartell was the founding chief operating officer and then

executive vice president of the Center for American Progress. Her work focused on the economy and housing markets, and she directed the Mortgage Finance Working Group and "Doing What Works" government performance program. Before her tenure in government, she practiced law with the Washington, DC, firm Arnold & Porter. Wartell has an AB degree with honors in urban affairs from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. She has a JD degree from Yale Law School.



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