

How Diversifying the Real Estate Agent Profession Can Benefit Both Homebuyers and Agents of Color

Speaker Biographies

Hope Atuel has served as Executive Director of the Asian Real Estate Association of America (AREAA) since January 2012. Prior to assuming the role of Executive Director at AREAA, she served in different capacities from membership, marketing and communications and government relations in other trade organizations for the last 25 years. In her spare time, you will find Hope spending it with family and her rescue pug, Pooka.

Ryan Davis is the Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the National Association of REALTORS® where he leads the DEI strategy on behalf of the association's more than 1.5 million members involved in all aspects of residential and commercial real estate. He also provides strategic guidance to executives across 1,100+ local and state REALTOR® associations, leads NAR's industry partnerships with diverse real estate organizations, and serves as a subject matter expert on NAR's DEI resources and content. Prior to joining NAR, Ryan was the Associate Vice President of Institutional Equity and Diversity at Brown University where he led the second phase of the university's DEI strategic plan, developed Brown's Guide to Diversifying Faculty Searches, and led the University to receive its first-ever INSIGHT into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award. Ryan is earning a Ph.D. at Indiana University and an executive coaching certification at Columbia University. He authored (or co-authored) more than 20 peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, or monographs on diversity, equity, and inclusion matters.

Dr. Jessica Lautz is Deputy Chief Economist and Vice President of Research at the National Association of REALTORS®. The core of her research focuses on analyzing trends for both NAR members and housing consumers. Through the management of surveys, focus groups, and data analysis, she presents new and innovative ways to showcase results. She effectively utilizes Research data to educate and impact policymakers on the state of the housing market and discusses research findings in major media outlets and international presentations. In 2021, Dr. Lautz was named one of Housing Wire's Women of Influence, a list representing 100 of the most influential women in leadership in the housing industry. In 2022 and 2023, Dr. Lautz was named a RISMedia Newsmaker in the Influencer and the Crusader categories, respectively. She also volunteers at Nottingham Trent University as an industry fellow mentoring real estate graduate students. Jessica received her Doctorate of Real Estate from Nottingham Trent University in the United Kingdom. She also holds a Master's in Public Policy from American University and undergraduate degrees in Political Science and Law and Justice from Central Washington University.

Michael Neal is a principal research associate in the Housing Finance Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Previously, he worked at Fannie Mae, where he was a director of economics in the Economic and Strategic Research Group. Before his service at Fannie Mae, Neal was the assistant vice president at the National Association of Home Builders' Economic and Housing Policy department. As a housing economist, Neal has an in-depth knowledge of housing market trends and has provided expert analysis and commentary on housing to media outlets around the country. Previously, he worked at Congress's Joint Economic Committee, the Federal Reserve System, the Congressional Budget Office, and Goldman Sachs. Neal has a bachelor's degree in economics from Morehouse College and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Pennsylvania. Neal is a member of the Homeownership Working Group for Project REACH, serves on the advisory board for the Ashoka-Brookings Challenge, and works an independent consultant for AlphaSights.

Lydia Pope is Currently the National President and 3rd Woman of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers formed in 1947. Lydia has been in the Real Estate Industry since 1995 and is Owner/President of E&D Realty, E&D Realty Property Management, E&D Construction Company and New Era Real Estate Group Inc where she is co-owner. Lydia's Passion for Education & the Dream of Homeownership has encouraged her to operate as a Certified Branch Manager for 2 Housing Counseling Offices: Cleveland and Detroit, MI for NID-HCA, A HUD Approved Counseling Agency. She holds a Bachelors in Communications and a Masters' in Business & Project Management. Lydia is currently married to Pastor LeNard E. Pope, Sr Founder & Pastor of Greater Fellowship Assembly Church & Mantalk LLC. Together they have 4 adult children and 5 grandchildren.

Jaimie Smeraski is the Policy, Learning, & Research Director for the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals (NAHREP), heading the organization's public policy and research efforts, and supporting the organization's national programs. In this role, Jaimie is the lead author of the State of Hispanic Homeownership and State of Hispanic Wealth Reports.