

Beyond Engagement: Community-Led Initiatives toward Equitable Health

Speaker Biographies

Heber M. Brown, III has been a catalyst for personal transformation and social change for more than twenty years. For nearly fourteen years, he served as pastor of a baptist church in Baltimore where he saw and experienced the impacts of food apartheid. This inspired him to launch the Black Church Food Security Network which advances food security and food sovereignty by co-creating Black food ecosystems anchored by Black congregations in partnership with Black farmers and other food justice stakeholders. His work has garnered numerous awards and national recognition. He serves on the board of many impactful organizations such as Bread For The World and is currently writing his first book entitled, *Nothing More Sacred: Radical Stories Of Black Church Faith, Food and Freedom*. The book is scheduled to be published in Fall 2024.

Kristen Brown is a senior research associate in the Health Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Her research takes a multilevel, transdisciplinary approach to examining how structural and social factors contribute to racial and socioeconomic health inequities. A trained epidemiologist, much of her recent work has focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic including examining differential access to health care resources, insurance coverage stability for children, and strategies for mitigating the long-term effects of the pandemic in communities of color. Before joining the Urban Institute, Dr. Brown previously worked in the National Human Genome Research Institute at the National Institutes of Health and in the Department of Epidemiology at Emory University. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Rutgers University in biological sciences and psychology, Master of Science degree from University of Michigan in human genetics, and Ph.D. from University of Michigan in epidemiologic science.

Erin Miles Cloud is a Senior Attorney with Civil Rights Corps, where she focuses on litigation and advocacy challenging family separation by carceral systems such as the family regulation and the criminal legal systems. Erin comes to CRC, after founding Movement for Family Power, an organization that works to end the policing and punishment of families by the family regulation system. Prior to starting that organization, she was a public defender in the Bronx, and a teacher in Baltimore. She has over a decade of experience fighting carceral systems, and has taught a holistic defense clinic at Columbia University and Critical Race Theory at CUNY School of Law. She holds a bachelor's degree in Spanish Language and Dance from Emory University and a law degree from Fordham University School of Law. Her writing can be found in the CUNY Law Review, The Abolitionist Newspaper by Critical Resistance, and Barnard Center for Research on Women. She also is a mother of two amazing children.

Kari Thatcher has been a member of the Greensboro Health Disparities Collaborative (GHDC) since 2015 and served as Co-Chair from 2017 – 2023. She holds a Master of Public Health in Health Behavior from the Gillings School of Global Public Health at UNC, Chapel Hill and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre from Chapman University. From 2014 - 2022, Kari worked with the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence implementing and evaluating intimate partner violence prevention efforts funded by the CDC DELTA program. Currently, she serves as the board chair for The Partnership Project, Inc., the non-profit that supports the work of the GHDC and focuses her time on working with communities and institutions to advance racial equity through education, policy change, and evaluation.

Maria Thomas is an advocate and organizer whose work over the last two decades has spanned health care systems, arts/theatre organizations, and global health organizations like UNICEF. As a multiply displaced immigrant, an internationalist and anti-imperialist commitment lies at the heart of her work and politics.

Thomas was the Child Advocacy Director at the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for 17 years, and the Director of Community Benefit and Community Health Needs Assessment at UMHS for almost a decade, where she focused on addressing social determinants of health that drive health inequities through health system investments in housing, accessible mental health services, food banks and meal delivery programs, legal aid, interpretation services, and other social supports. In her current role as the Beyond Do No Harm fellow at Interrupting Criminalization, she organizes against policing and criminalization in medical care and public health spaces. Thomas has a Master's in English Literature from Oxford University, UK, and a Master of Public Administration (MPA) in nonprofit management from Columbia University.

Christina Yongue has managed NIH research studies which identified where institutional racism existed and which eliminated a racial health disparity in cancer care through a community-based participatory research approach. The organization which initiated and led those research studies with accountability is the Greensboro Health Disparities Collaborative. Her motivation and passion for racial health equity comes from the grief and loss she experienced as a result of losing her mother early to breast cancer the year before she became a mother, in 2006. Her community activism and advocacy are rooted in social justice and spirituality. She is the co-coordinator for the Social Justice and Advocacy Ministry at her church. She is currently the Director of Undergraduate Studies and an Associate Professor in the Department of Public Health Education at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), her alma mata. At UNCG, she organized the first "Social Justice and Health Equity Symposium," and co-chaired the "Voices for Reproductive Justice" conference series. For North Carolina, she is the Co-Chair for the Stakeholder Advisory Board for the ACURE4Moms research study ("Accountability for Care using Undoing Racism and Equity 4 Moms"), which is a PICOI-funded project working to decrease pregnancy complications for all women by addressing institutional racism and bias and improving community-based social support during pregnancy. She is the mother of two talented daughters.

Kimá Joy Taylor is the founder of Anka Consulting, a health care consulting firm, and a nonresident fellow at the Urban Institute. Taylor collaborates with Urban Institute researchers on a number of topics, including analyses of racial disparities in screening and treatment practices for parents with substance use disorder, management of neonatal abstinence syndrome at hospitals in California, and prevention and early detection of mental and behavioral health problems among adolescents and young adults. She most recently served as the director of the Open Society Foundations' National Drug Addiction Treatment and Harm Reduction Program. She oversaw grantmaking that supported the expansion of access to a nonpunitive continuum of integrated, evidence-informed, and culturally effective substance use disorder services. Before joining the Open Society Foundations, Taylor served as deputy commissioner for the Baltimore City Health Department, a health and social policy legislative assistant for Senator Sarbanes, and a pediatrician at a federally qualified health center in Washington, DC. Taylor is a graduate of Brown University, Brown University School of Medicine, and the Georgetown University residency program in pediatrics. In 2002, Taylor was awarded a Commonwealth Foundation fellowship in minority health policy at Harvard University.