

# Giving Innovation Summit 2024: The Place of Pluralism in Charitable Giving

## Speaker Biographies

**Aisha Alexander-Young** is managing director at Frontline Solutions. She is a context creator, systems disruptor, and community organizer whose career is focused on the intersection of race, place, and opportunity. She has held leadership positions in philanthropy, local government, grassroots organizations and small and large nonprofits. Most recently, Aisha served as Chief Executive Officer of Giving Gap, formerly known as Give Blck, an organization dedicated to building the movement for the equitable funding of Black nonprofits. Prior to joining Giving Gap, Aisha was Vice President for Strategy & Equity at the Meyer Foundation, where she led efforts to integrate racial equity and justice into all areas of the Foundation's work. In her tenure at Meyer, Aisha built and led work to shift the philanthropic sector's relationship and support of nonprofits and movements led by Black and other people of color. She is particularly noted for her development of the Fund for Black-Led Change, a \$20 million commitment of core support to Black-led organizations that are building power, advancing organized communities, and transforming systems. Aisha joined the philanthropic sector after 5 years as Director of Thought Leadership at KABOOM, where she shaped and led initiatives to create public space equity for kids and families in marginalized communities. She also spent seven years as the Advancement Director for Dream Defenders, her political home and a movement founded in the wake of the murder of Trayvon Martin, focused on building power and a new vision of freedom and safety in Black, Latinx, immigrant, and working-class communities. The majority of Aisha's local government leadership experience was for the City of Charlotte, where she was Operations Director for the Department of Neighborhood & Economic Development, responsible for the strategic vision and implementation plan for the city's initiatives to advance equitable neighborhoods. Aisha founded the Black Mamas March to organize mothers and caregivers of Black children to advocate for their well-being in public systems; is co-founder of Resourcing Radical Justice, a member of District Motherhood Society, serves as a board member for the Association of Black Foundation Executives, and volunteers as the president of the PTA in her neighborhood school. Aisha attended Hampton University, where she earned her BA in English and Early Childhood Education, studied social work at

Temple University's School of Public Health, concentrating in Community and Policy Practice, and is currently pursuing her Public Leadership Credential from Harvard Kennedy School. She lives in DC with her partner Jeffrey, and two adorable babes, Hailey (7) and Mercy (2)- last in this bio, but first in her life.

**Sam Gill** is the president and CEO of the Doris Duke Foundation (DDF), a New York-headquartered, national philanthropic organization that operates five national grantmaking programs—in the performing arts, the environment, medical research, child and family well-being, and mutual understanding between communities—as well as Duke Farms and Shangri La, two centers that serve the public directly. Prior to joining DDF, Gill was senior vice president and chief program officer at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, where he oversaw more than \$100 million in annual grantmaking across the foundation's programs, in addition to managing Knight's research and assessment portfolio and its grants administration function.

**Brian Hooks** is chairman and CEO of [Stand Together](#), a philanthropic community that works with business leaders and philanthropists to address the country's biggest challenges. Brian is also president of the Charles Koch Foundation. Previously, he served as executive director and COO of the Mercatus Center at George Mason University, where he led strategy and operations for a growing research, education, and public policy center. He is co-author with Charles Koch of the national bestseller [Believe in People: Bottom Up Solutions for a Top Down World](#). In 2021, the TIME100 Next list recognized Brian as a leader shaping the future of his field. Brian serves on the boards of the Mercatus Center, Cosmos Institute, Economic Policy Innovation Center (EPIC), Institute for Humane Studies, Reason Foundation, and The Just Trust. He is a graduate of the University of Michigan and lives in Alexandria, Virginia, with his wife and daughter.

**Stacy Palmer** is chief executive of the Chronicle of Philanthropy, and has overseen the organization's transition as it became an independent nonprofit in April 2023. Palmer helped found the *Chronicle* in 1988, when it was started by the Chronicle of Higher Education, Inc. She has served as its top editor since 1996. Under Palmer's leadership the organization has evolved from its roots as a biweekly newspaper for social-sector professionals into an organization that offers a monthly magazine, robust news, advice, and opinion sections, and a host of webinars, briefings, and other services. In addition, she helped forge a [partnership](#) with the Associated Press and the Conversation designed to educate the public about the nonprofit world and to establish a fellowship program to coach local journalists to provide more sustained and sophisticated coverage of nonprofits and foundations. Palmer has appeared frequently on radio and television to offer commentary on news in the nonprofit world. She is the editor of *Challenges for Philanthropy and Nonprofits*, a book published by the University Press of New England that collects three decades of observations by the nonprofit activist and *Chronicle* columnist Pablo Eisenberg. Before she helped found *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, Palmer was editor for government and politics at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. She was also a longtime member of the Chronicle of Higher Education Inc. leadership team.

**Hilary Pennington** is Executive Vice President of Programs at the Ford Foundation. She oversees all of the foundation's programs globally, working closely across programs and offices to ensure strategic, meaningful, and well-aligned global grantmaking. She also oversees the foundation's BUILD program, and the Office of Strategy and Learning. Before assuming her current role, she served as the foundation's vice president for Education, Creativity, and Free Expression. A national expert on postsecondary education and intergenerational change, Hilary joined the foundation in 2013. Earlier, she was an independent consultant whose clients included the Next American University project of the New America Foundation and Arizona State University. She also led the Generations Initiative, a project funded by national foundations to develop effective responses to the dramatic demographic shifts occurring in the United States. Between 2006 and 2012, Hilary served as director of education, postsecondary success, and special initiatives at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, where she guided grant programs across the country and worldwide. Before joining Gates, she was a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and president and CEO of Jobs for the Future, a research and policy development organization she co-founded. In 22 years with JFF, Hilary helped the organization become one of the most influential in the country on issues of education, youth transitions, workforce development, and future work requirements. She also served on President Bill Clinton's transition team and as co-chair of his administration's presidential advisory committee on technology. Hilary serves on the boards of Bard College, the Center for Effective Philanthropy, and Giving Tuesday, and she is a member of the Trinity Church Vestry. She is a graduate of the Yale School of Management and Yale College, and she holds a graduate degree in social anthropology from Oxford University and a master's degree in theological studies from the Episcopal Divinity School. In 2000, she was a fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

**Benjamin Soskis** is a senior research associate in the Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy at the Urban Institute. His work explores the ways historical inquiry can inform contemporary philanthropic practice. He is especially interested in the relationship between philanthropy and democratic norms and institutions. A historian and journalist, Soskis is the coeditor of *HistPhil*, a web publication devoted to the history of civil society, and the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. Previously, he was a fellow at the Center for Nonprofit Management, Philanthropy, and Policy at George Mason University. A frequent contributor to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, his writing on philanthropy has also appeared in the *Washington Post*, the *Atlantic*, the *Guardian*, *Inside Philanthropy*, the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, and *Boston Review*. He is coauthor of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic: A Biography of the Song that Marches On* (Oxford University Press, 2013), author of "A History of Associational Life and the Nonprofit Sector in the United States," in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Stanford University Press, 2020), and co-editor of *Giving in Time: Temporal Consideration in Philanthropy* (Rowman & Littlefield/Urban Institute Press, 2023). Soskis has taught at the George Washington University and the University of California, Washington Center. He received his PhD in American history from Columbia University.

**Tené Traylor** is Vice President for Nonprofits and Philanthropy and the Research to Action Lab at the Urban Institute. She brings national expertise in place-based philanthropy, equity, and civic leadership, particularly in the South, where she has honed a distinguished career in the nonprofit and philanthropic sector. She joined Urban after concluding her tenure at The Kendeda Fund, where she oversaw several grantmaking portfolios totaling \$8 million annually. Before joining Kendeda, Traylor was a senior program officer at the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta. She led community development and neighborhood transformation grantmaking (including the Neighborhood Fund) for 10 years, launched several related programs and initiatives, and helped transform the foundation's grantmaking approach from programmatic to general or core support. She has also held positions with the United Way for Greater Atlanta and the Zeist Foundation Inc. Traylor holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Georgia State University and a master of public administration degree in public policy and nonprofit administration from the University of Georgia.

**Lori Villarosa** is the founder and executive director of the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE). She has been a trailblazer working consistently at the intersection of racial justice and philanthropy for the past 3 decades, engaging with thousands of funders at the community level, regionally, nationally and internationally to increase resources to combat systemic racism. PRE is governed by a diverse board of racial justice leaders and movement partners that work with staff to significantly shift grantmaking practices through PRE's conference workshops, Racial Justice Funder Labs, direct consultations, coaching, research and through PRE publications, such as the seminal [Grantmaking with a Racial Equity Lens guide](#), and more recent [Grantmaking with a Racial Justice Lens: A Practical Guide](#) & [Mismatched: Philanthropy's Response to the Call for Racial Justice](#). Prior to launching PRE in 2003, Lori worked at C.S. Mott Foundation for 12 years, where she was instrumental in developing and managing the foundation's portfolio to explicitly address institutional and societal racism, shepherding \$24 million in racial equity and justice grants in the 1990s to early 2000s. She has served on several foundation boards over the years, most recently chairing the Edward W. Hazen Foundation board, in leadership roles in the past with philanthropic infrastructure organizations including ABFE, AAPIP (as a past Chair), and now on Steering Committee & Executive Circle of CHANGE Philanthropy. She is also a member of United Philanthropy Forum's Racial Equity Committee and the Latin American Committee of WINGS (Worldwide Initiatives of Grantmaker Support). In addition to deep work within every region in the U.S. (with recent focus in the South), Lori has presented and worked with racial justice NGOs and grantmakers globally, including in Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Germany, Mexico, South Africa and the United Kingdom. She has been published in the *Chronicle on Philanthropy*, *Nonprofit Quarterly*, *The Alliance Magazine*, and is often quoted in other philanthropic media on issues of Black movement building, intersectional issues, racial justice philanthropy data and trends.