



HOSTED BY

**African
Economic
Development
Solutions**

*Building wealth within
African immigrant communities.*


20
22

3rd

NATIONAL AFRICAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

AEDS is very delighted to host
the 3rd National African
leadership conference

**LIFT AS
WE
CLIMB**



DR. VERNA PRICE



Prof. PLO LUBUMBA



THURSDAY
DECEMBER 8TH

&

FRIDAY
DECEMBER 9TH

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ABOUT US

A lending Organization that helps African immigrants achieve their dreams and goals. Whether it be Homeownership or starting their own business. African Economic Development Solutions (AEDS) has been proudly serving Minnesota's African immigrants since the year of 2008.



AEDS helps build wealth within African immigrant communities throughout the twin cities metropolitan area. We have created wealth within African communities and lifted them out of poverty. We take pride in the fact that we can link our clients to vital resources and connect them with important local organizations. We ultimately want to create an environment in which Africans can thrive. A space where African immigrants create businesses and opportunities for each other, where we can break out of the shackles of poverty and despair.

We do this by offering Entrepreneurship opportunities and training, small business technical assistance, loan programs, homeownership training and education, and Community Development Solutions.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

12.08.22

8:30am

- Registration Opens
- Continental Breakfast

10:00am–11:00am

- Performance by Addisu Furgassa
- Keynote by Prof. PLO Lumumba

11:10am–12:05pm

- Morning Breakout sessions

12:15pm– 1:25pm

- Buffet Lunch
- Performance by Genet Abate
- Women in Leadership Panel

2:00pm–3:10pm

- Afternoon Breakout sessions

3:10pm–4:30pm

- Address and Q&A with Eskinder Negash
- Panel and Q&A with three participants from Lifeworks Services, Inc.

6:00pm –8:00pm

- Private Dinner with Prof. PLO Lumumba – Preregistration was required

CONFERENCE AGENDA ^{12.09.22}



8:30am

- Registration Opens
- Continental Breakfast

9:00am–10:00am

- Performance by Afrocontigbo
- Keynote by Dr. Verna Price

10:20am–11:15am

- Morning breakout sessions


11:30 – 12:30pm

- Buffet Lunch
- Performance by Somali Dance Group
- Youth in Leadership Panel

12:45pm–1:40pm

- Afternoon breakout sessions

1:15pm–2:30pm

- Closing remarks by Gene Gelgelu
 - African leadership award presentation
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OPENING AND CLOSING REMARKS

DR. GENE GELGELU

FOUNDER, PRESIDENT AND
CEO OF AEDS

Dr. Gene Gelgelu is the founder, president and CEO of African Economic Development Solutions (AEDS) and Little Africa. He has more than 25 years of leadership, operational, creative entrepreneurship, and creative placemaking expertise.

Originally from Ethiopia, Gene has deep connections to Minnesota's African immigrant communities and a unique cultural competency to work with people from a variety of backgrounds and languages. He has a bachelor's degree from Metropolitan State University and an M.B.A in Finance and a Doctor of Education in Leadership from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. Dr. Gene also served as a planning and human rights commissioner for the city of St. Paul from 2010-2017. Gene is a Shannon Institute leadership fellow, the Roy Wilkins Community Fellow, and the Bush Foundation leadership Fellow. Gene serves as board member at MCCD and MC.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Professor PLO Lumumba

Professor PLO Lumumba is the Founder of the PLO Lumumba Foundation and a consultant with Lumumba and Lumumba Advocates, a member of the Africa Justice Group (AJG). He is an Advocate of the High Courts of Kenya and Tanganyika and a certified mediator. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Certified Public Secretaries of Kenya FCPS (K), a Fellow of the Kenya Institute of Management (FKIM), and an Honorary Fellow of the African Academy of Sciences (FAAS). He is the Chairman of Farafina Investment Group in Monrovia, Liberia, and Economic Strategic Growth and Development Initiative for Africa is based in Nigeria.

He has authored several books on diverse subjects. With several speeches on diverse subjects delivered in and outside Africa, Lumumba is recognized as one of the leading public speakers in Africa and the African in the Diaspora. He is the founder of several organizations including the PLO Lumumba Foundation, a charitable organization that has been in operation since 1990. He has also been twice recognized as one of the 100 most influential Africans.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Dr. Verna Cornelia Price

Dr. Verna Cornelia Price is an internationally known human potential expert who specializes in personal power, excellence, cross-cultural communications, leadership and change. As the CEO of The Power of People Consulting Group™, a leadership and management consulting firm, Dr. Verna consults with diverse audiences spanning from corporations, government agencies, not-for profits, K-16 educators and universities with clients in the United States, Europe, The Caribbean, Central American, Africa and China. Dr. Verna has founded multiple organizations in the USA including an Undergraduate Leadership Academic Minor at the University of Minnesota, The Power of People Leadership Institute, Girls in Action™(renamed Girls Taking Action) and Boys of Hope™. In 2021, Dr. Verna was named Leader of the Year by TeamWomen for her leadership impact on the development of women and girls.

In 2020, Dr. Verna was named one of the Top 100 People to Know in 2021 by Twin Cities Business Magazine. In 2020, Dr. Verna created and hosted a radio talk show in partnership WCCO Radio called In the Room Where it Happened: Racism Conversations that Matter to ALL of Us. In 2017, Dr. Verna received the Founders Award from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities for her role in co-founding the Undergraduate Leadership Academic Minor, now the largest of its kind in the world. In 2013, Dr. Verna was named an Everyday Hero by EBONY Magazine and received the MN LINKS Emerald Award. In 2010, Dr. Verna was named Entrepreneur of the Year by the Black MBAs and Pioneer of the Year by Women Venture. Dr. Verna is a best selling author of three books, The Power of People: Four Kinds of People Who Can Change Your Life, The Silent Cry: Dealing with Subtractors in Work and Life , and Change Your Life in 30 Days. Dr. Verna received her Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. She is married and has four children

MAIN STAGE SPEAKER



Eskinder Negash

Eskinder Negash is President and CEO of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), an organization founded in 1911 to protect the rights and address the needs of persons in forced or voluntary migration worldwide and support their transition to a dignified life.

Mr. Negash is a recognized senior executive leader and brings nearly 40 years of proven non-profit management experience on behalf of refugees, immigrants, and other populations in need. Prior to joining USCRI, he served from 2009-2015 as Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), the largest government-funded refugee resettlement organization globally. With a budget of over \$1.5 billion, the ORR plays a critical role in providing essential services to a wide range of vulnerable people through the Resettlement Program, Rescue & Restore anti-trafficking campaign, and the Unaccompanied Children's Program. Under Negash's leadership, ORR served more than 400,000 refugees, 150,000 asylees, 125,000 Cuban and Haitian Entrants, nearly 21,000 Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa holders, 3,200 Victims of Trafficking, over 32,000 U.S. repatriates, and almost 116,000 unaccompanied children, totaling approximately 850,000 people during his six years of service.

In 2020, Dr. Verna was named one of the Top 100 People to Know in 2021 by Twin Cities Business Magazine. In 2020, Dr. Verna created and hosted a radio talk show in partnership WCCO Radio called In the Room Where it Happened: Racism Conversations that Matter to ALL of Us. In 2017, Dr. Verna received the Founders Award from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities for her role in co-founding the Undergraduate Leadership Academic Minor, now the largest of its kind in the world. In 2013, Dr. Verna was named an Everyday Hero by EBONY Magazine and received the MN LINKS Emerald Award. In 2010, Dr. Verna was named Entrepreneur of the Year by the Black MBAs and Pioneer of the Year by Women Venture. Dr. Verna is a best selling author of three books, The Power of People: Four Kinds of People Who Can Change Your Life, The Silent Cry: Dealing with Subtractors in Work and Life , and Change Your Life in 30 Days. Dr. Verna received her Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. She is married and has four children

MAIN STAGE SPEAKER



Lisa Zaspel

Lisa Zaspel is Chief Program Officer for Lifeworks Services, Inc. effective November 1, 2022. Lisa joined Lifeworks in 2016 as the Vice President of Services to lead Fiscal and In-Home Services. During her tenure, Fiscal Services at Lifeworks have grown, and her team recently met the goal of enrolling their 2,000th customer with Lifeworks. Lisa has a well-established career in human services in Minnesota. Prior to Lifeworks, Lisa was the Director of Residential Living Services at Fraser. Lisa also led programs at Cooperating Community Programs and was responsible for the design and implementation of the Consumer Directed Community Supports waiver funding option when she worked for Ramsey County in 2000 and 2001.

Lisa lives in Stillwater and enjoys spending time with family and a trusted crew of friends she's known for years. She likes cabining in the summertime and watching the Vikings and the Wild beat whichever team they're playing.

MAIN STAGE SPEAKERS



Gertrude Matemba-Mutasa

Gertrude K. Matemba-Mutasa is president and CEO of Lifeworks Services, Inc. Gertrude comes to Lifeworks from the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) where she served as Assistant Commissioner of the Community Supports Administration. She's also served as the Executive Director of Phyllis Wheatley Community Center where she successfully rejuvenated a North Minneapolis legacy institution that was on the brink of closing.

Gertrude also directed operations at Minneapolis-based First Children's Finance and WomenVenture and was the owner and director of Bright Beginnings Preschool. Gertrude lives with her husband in Maple Grove. They have three daughters ages 21, 19, and 15. She has an MBA from the University of North Carolina and majored in Accounting and Business Administration at Bennett College.



Muna Mohamed

Muna Mohammed is Diversity and Inclusion Director at Lifeworks Services, Inc. She joined Lifeworks from an organizational development consultancy, where she supported clients in strategizing and maximizing their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

THURSDAY
DECEMBER 8, 2022



Creative Placemaking

SESSION MODERATOR



Kathy Mouacheupa

Kathy Mouacheupao (she/her/hers) has been the executive director with the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (MRAC) since 2018.

She is passionate about the intersection of arts, culture and community and has dedicated her personal and professional life to the field. Prior to MRAC, Kathy served as Program Officer for Creative Placemaking with the Twin Cities Local Initiatives Corporation (TC LISC). In her earlier career, she was the Executive Director for the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent (CHAT).

She was a 2016 Roy Wilkins Fellow and a 2011 Bush Leadership Fellow. Currently, she is the President for the Forum of Regional Arts Councils of MN, and is a board member of MN Citizens for the Arts, the Grantmakers in the Arts, the F.R. Bigelow Foundation, and the Building More Philanthropy with Purpose Giving Circle.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Keith Baker

Keith Baker is the executive director for ReConnect Rondo, Inc., an umbrella advocacy organization committed to addressing racial disparities in Minnesota. Keith is leading the organization's mission to revitalize the Rondo Community, creating Minnesota's first African American cultural enterprise district.

Keith has more than 35 years of experience in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. His 18 years with the Minnesota Department of Transportation included oversight of federal and state professional technical contract administration and construction compliance monitoring. Keith served as a member of the Ramsey County Blue Ribbon Commission in 2010, which was at the forefront of elevating Minnesota's ranking as 50th in the nation for racial disparities.

Keith has proved instrumental in the successful orchestration of a collective impact approach that ensured equitable inclusion of minority- and women-owned engineering and architect firms on the billion-dollar U.S. Bank Stadium project.



DR. Katherine Loflin

Dr. Katherine Loflin through her global brand of "The City Doctor" is an award-winning, internationally-recognized trailblazer on place science--what makes people love their city and why it matters to economic vitality and individual well-being. She was the Lead Consultant and National Expert for the Knight Soul of the Community project which is credited for forever changing the way cities are designed and imagined for human thriving and local economic growth. Her work has been cited for improving the quality of life for millions of people globally through her groundbreaking place research and projects, book "Place Match", former radio show, TEDx talks, frequent press appearances, and hundreds of invited keynotes around the world. Dr. Loflin also writes and produces the stories of place through original stage productions, film projects, and innovative local history events that are consistently sold-out, profit-making projects, earning her national and statewide awards and recognition.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Jamie Schumacher

Jamie Schumacher traded the warm beaches of California for the snowy lakes of Minnesota. She found art, community, and more.

By day she works with LISC Twin Cities, working with the Twin Cities cultural districts. By night she's a visual artist and an accomplished writer. Jamie's work has been featured in Pollen, Star Tribune, and Minnesota Women's Press. Her two books *It's Never Going To Work* (2018) and *Butterflies and Tall Bikes* (2021) are narrative nonfictions featuring Minnesota's creative communities. Jamie is a 2023 Loft Mirrors and Windows Fellow, and is currently working on a children's book series about Sri Lanka.

Housing and Homeownership/Housing Finance



Nelima Sitati Munene

Nelima Sitati Munene is a Community Development professional and strategist working to advance racial, economic, and social justice. She currently serves as the Executive Director of the African Career Education & Resource, Inc. (ACER). Nelima is passionate about public service and civic engagement. She has served on various non-profit boards and government commissions, including Women Venture and the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability.

Nelima served on the Metropolitan Council's Housing Policy and Planning Work Group and is the current Co-Chair of the Council's Equity Advisory Committee. Nelima is an Alumni of the Hubert Humphrey Public Policy Fellowship and the James P. Shannon Leadership Institute. She was also named to the 2022-2023 cohort of the Minnesota Young American Leaders Program. Nelima is committed to developing and connecting the next generation to leadership roles. Her most important role in life is being a mother and a wife.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Trent Bowman

Trent manages outreach efforts in the Minneapolis area with an emphasis on mortgage lending. His primary focus is to support affordable housing initiatives by engaging community organizations to assess community needs and build collaborative partnerships with local non-profit housing organizations, civic groups, and affordable housing developers to make a positive impact.

With more than 20 years of experience, Trent specializes in assisting first-time homebuyers achieve their dream of homeownership by guiding each client through the mortgage lending process. Robert received a Master of Arts in Political Science, a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts in Africana Studies, all from Brooklyn College. Robert is Ghanaian-American and a native of Brooklyn.



Julie Gugin

Julie Gugin has served as the President of the Minnesota Homeownership Center since 2007. She has more than twenty-five years of experience in non-profit leadership and housing program development. Prior to joining the Center, Ms. Gugin served as Associate Director of Supportive Housing at the Wilder Foundation in St. Paul, MN, and as Vice President of programs and Interim Executive Director at Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity.

As part of her work with the Minnesota Homeownership Center, she founded and currently co-chairs the Homeownership Opportunity Alliance. She currently represents the Center on its board of directors as a co-owner. Her work includes oversight of government contracts and other funding relationships, including with the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, Minnesota Department of Commerce, HUD, and Fannie Mae. Ms. Gugin holds an M.B.A from Hamline University and a B.S. degree in Technical Communications from the University of Minnesota.

Small Business and Economic Development:- Alternate Financing /Islamic Financing



Watchen Bruce

Watchen Harris Bruce is the President and CEO of Baltimore Community Lending BCL), a nonprofit mission-based lender & certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). BCL provides loans and technical assistance to small businesses and affordable housing developers in underserved & advantaged low-income communities in the Baltimore area. Ms. Bruce has over thirty-five plus years of banking, development finance, small business lending, economic development, international development, affordable housing, and leadership experience. She has extensive development finance experience, both nationally and internationally. Prior to joining BCL, she served as Chief of Party/Country Director of the USAID-funded project “Investing for Business Expansion” (IBEX) project, access to finance, and business development project in Liberia for five years. She also served as Deputy Chief of the Party for another USAID-funded project “Liberia Agribusiness Development Activity” for 3 years. On the national level, Ms. Bruce served as Vice President at several national banks in the U.S.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Idris Mohamed

Mr. Idris Mohamed, MBA currently works for the African Economic Development Solutions (AEDS) of Minnesota as Director of Business Development and Housing. Mr. Mohamed came to the US in 1998 as a first-generation Somali immigrant. Besides working for AEDS, Mr. Mohamed is a Ph.D. student of Business Management with a specialty in Accounting at Capella University.

Mr. Mohammed's core skills include strategic management and financial accounting as well as Islamic Finance with a special interest in Islamic Accounting research. He has taught Case Studies in Strategic Management (Capstone course) at the Metropolitan State University in Minnesota and accounting at a charter school.

Finally, Mr. Mohamed was once an owner and Director of a home health care and Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies (DMEPOS) business and currently owns a freight broker company.



Ahmed Mohidin

Ahmed Mohidin is a professional Small Business Consultant with a passion for assisting BIPOC-owned businesses in Minnesota with business establishment, business retention, and access to capital. He also serves as a Workforce and Economic Development Facilitator and Project Management Professional, holds a Certified G.C.D.F credential and (PMP) Certification, and has been a workforce development specialist at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development since 2021; in addition, he has been pursuing a master's degree in applied economics at Cloud State University.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Rep. Mohamud Noor

Mohamud Noor represents District 60B in the Minnesota House of Representative. District 60B includes the University of Minnesota, Augsburg University and the Marcy-Holmes, Prospect Park, Como, and Cedar-Riverside neighborhoods in Minneapolis. He was elected to serve in 2018.

As Chair of the Workforce and Economic Development Committee, Noor is responsible for advancing economic opportunity for Minnesotans, and supporting job creation and business growth.

Noor devotes his time to advocating for families, children, youth, students, seniors, people with disabilities, and workers. He is committed to amplifying the unique voices of young people and all his constituents. Noor is a native of Somalia, he migrated to the United States in 1999 and has called Minneapolis his home. He lives in the Southeast Como neighborhood with his wife, Farhiya Del, who is an educator with the Minneapolis Public Schools, and their four children.

Women in Leadership



Lulete Mola

Lulete Mola is the Co-Founder and President of the Black Collective Foundation MN, Minnesota's first Black community foundation advancing the genius of Black-led change. Previously, Lulete was the Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer at the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, where she led the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota, a \$10M public-private partnership to achieve equity in opportunities and improve the lives of Black, Indigenous, and young women of color.

Lulete is on the Minnesota Council of Foundations Board of Directors and VoteRunLead National Advisory Board. Lulete is the recipient of the 2020 SOAR fellowship with the Aspen Institute Forum on Women and Girls. In 2022, Lulete received The Facing Race Award for her work in challenging absent and harmful narratives on race, building solutions, and pushing for justice and equity. Lulete graduated summa cum laude from the University of Minnesota where she recently received the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) Emerging Alumni Award.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Rahel Getachew

Rahel Getachew is an entrepreneur and founder of Afrolehar Branding, an ICT driven brand marketing, trade and publishing company for multicultural markets. Under the leadership of Ms. Getachew, Afrolehar has been able to secure government, private sector and select International non-profit clients to provide multicultural branding services including but not limited to strategic branding, media relations, and digital diplomacy. As an Ethiopian born North America woman who has traveled 4 continents visiting countries such as Germany, Lebanon and the UK aside from implementing programs in countries like Benin, Ghana and Ethiopia, she enjoys cultural exchanges and understanding organizational behaviors.

As part of building capacity, Ms. Getachew has participated at various high-level conferences, seminars and meetings on Trade, security, global affairs and emerging markets. Ms. Getachew is a graduate of Concordia University in Political Science and Business with a focus on globalization and emerging markets, and is certified in ICT and teaching ESL.



Farhio Khalif

Born in Somalia, Farhio Khalif is the Founder and Executive Director of Voice of East African Women (VEAW). She is also the Founder of Farhio House, a shelter for East African and Muslim women who are homeless and/or escaping violence. In September 2017, Governor Mark Dayton gave proclamation to Farhio House Day and Speaker of the House Kurt Daut and Representative Karan Clark gave Farhio House Day resolution.

She is the Vice Chair of the Unity Community Mediation Team, established to develop a new model of public safety in Minneapolis Police Department (MPD). She is a Co-founder and member of United Black Legislative Agenda and co-chair of the Somali American Task Force addressing youth recruitment by ISIS. Ms. Khalif has received a community leadership award from Metropolitan Inter-faith Council on Affordable Housing (MICAHA) for her work to advance access to affordable housing and received a Bush Foundation Fellowship.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Comfort Dudzai Dondo

Comfort Dondo is a visionary Public Policy and Civic Change Leader, Social Worker, and Community Healer. She has over ten years of experience in advancing advocacies, initiatives, and programs for women empowerment and community development for the poor, marginalized and oppressed. Currently, Comfort is working as the Founding Executive Director of her very own culturally specific organization, the Phumulani Minnesota – African Women Against Violence.

Comfort is the first-time author of Facing the Giants, a self-help book and healing tool for survivors of trauma. She is now a Ph.D. Candidate in Psychology and Transformative Leadership with St. Mary's University of Minnesota. Presently she also sits on the Governor's task force on ending violence in Minnesota while consulting with local, national, and international agencies, including the UN, UN Women, and many more. Comfort is a Co-Host on two local TV shows in Minnesota, Women of the World and Empire Radio/TV show.

Art, Culture, Heritage, Identity/Cultural Healing



Eden Bart, MHC

Since joining the Humanities Center staff in 2003, Eden Bart has worked on a wide range of projects. She has served as a liaison to schools within school partnership programs, planned and facilitated professional development workshops, and led the development of educator resources. She is currently the staff lead on cultural immersive experiences, working in partnership with community partners and individuals to co-create learning experiences for a wide audience. Prior to joining the Humanities Center, Eden taught sixth grade in the Wayzata Public Schools. She received a B.A. from Macalester College and an M.A. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of St. Thomas.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Dr. Artika R. Tyner

Dr. Artika R. Tyner is a passionate educator, author, sought after speaker, and advocate for justice. Tyner is the founder of Planting People Growing Justice Press and Bookstore. In recognition of her leadership and service, she is the recipient of more than two dozen awards that include: Women in Business, American Small Business Champion, International Educator Citizen, and American Bar Association Difference Makers.

She has been featured in a variety of media outlets. She is a prolific, award-winning author of adult and children's books that includes: *Amazing Africa: A to Z* and *The Inclusive Leader: Taking Intentional Action for Justice and Equity*. She serves as a global citizen by supporting education, entrepreneurship, and women's leadership initiatives in Africa. In furtherance of her philanthropic efforts, she created Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute, a nonprofit organization committed to promoting literacy and diversity in books.



Tisa Chigaga

Tisa Chigaga is an economist turned filmmaker. She has done several artistic and commercial projects, of which the most recent is *Frieda* (Queensworld Film Festival 2022). Currently, Tisa has yet another short in post production, and works at the African Film Festival New York.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Dr. David O. Fakunle

David Fakunle, Ph.D. is a “mercenary for change,” serving as Assistant Professor at the Morgan State University School of Community Health & Policy, Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Florida Center for Arts in Medicine, and Associate Faculty at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. His interests include stressors within the built environment, manifestations of racism, and use of arts and culture to strengthen health, equity, and ultimately liberation. He additionally serves as Chair of the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the first state-level body in the U.S. chronicling and bringing justice to racial terror lynchings.

Small Business and Economic Development:-Innovation, Communications, Technology, FinTech



Jote Taddese

Jote has over 20 years of experience as a customer-centric IT executive with proven outcomes of influencing, shaping and executing enterprise strategies that take data and translate into meaningful digital transformations which enable C-Suite business executives to incorporate new insights into their decision-making processes. He is a proven industry thought leader with many years in senior leadership roles with strategic accountabilities in the areas of Data Monetization, Enterprise Data Architecture and Digital Transformation capabilities. In addition to being a C-Suite strategic advisor, a board executive and a social entrepreneur, Jote is currently a Vice President of Engineering at Rally Health, Inc. which is a leading consumer-centric digital health company that develops web and mobile experiences that make it easier for consumers to take charge of their health and health care needs.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Bright Enabulele

Bright Enabulele (MBA) is the Founding President of Oduwa Blockchain Solutions LTD. He studied at the University of East London. He has a background as a software engineer, entrepreneur, and blockchain strategist. His focus is to create economic opportunities and financial literacy for underserved communities around the world. As an African, Bright brings awareness to cryptocurrency knowledge within the underserved community. At Oduwacoin, Bright brings those left in the dark regarding financial literacy and educates them. Garnering his experience in blockchain technology, he has utilized this to inform people unfamiliar with the concept of cryptocurrency and blockchain.



Garrio Harrison

Garrio was born and raised in Jamaica. He's currently a partner at the sales-focused marketing agency, Curious. Outside of working with clients, he dedicates time to community development and supporting the next generation of business leaders and works with the Silicon North Stars, a non-profit committed to inspiring young Minnesotans to become future technology leaders. You can learn more about their work at www.siliconnorthstars.org. Garrio is not just a shrewd businessperson and an intelligent marketer, he's first and foremost a family man and a constant fixture on the Peloton leaderboard.

AFRICAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES



Djimet Dogo

(Mined from internet) Djimet Dogo is the Associate Director of the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) and Director IRCO/Africa House. His work to effect true community engagement includes a demonstrated history of over 23 years' experience facilitating collaborative coalition building for refugee and immigrant communities. His many educational qualifications include a Master of Public Administration from PSU and several degrees in Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, Peace building and Leadership from France, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and South Africa. Mr. Dogo was pivotal in the creation of the culturally specific community focal point Africa House in 2006—the only culturally and linguistically specific one-stop service center targeting the increasingly diverse and rapidly growing number of African immigrants and refugees living in Oregon.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Sarah Zullo

As the Director of the ECDC/ACC DC-Metro, Ms. Zullo oversees a multi-partner and multi-cultural organization supporting English language services, workforce development, refugee reception and placement, case management, public health, community development, immigration, housing services, and youth programs.

Ms. Zullo holds an M.A. in Public Administration from the University of Colorado. Her prior work experience includes working as a Volunteer Resources Manager, and Refugee Integration Project Manager. She also served as an intern in the Colorado Office of Public Defender, and in addition to English, she speaks Amharic, French, and Spanish.



Fasika Alem

Fasika Alem currently serves as the Programs Director of the United African Organization, a coalition-based not-for-profit that promotes social and economic justice, civic participation, and empowerment among African immigrants and refugees in Illinois. At UAO, Fasika leads the organization's public policy advocacy and community organizing work, building relationships with other organizations and coalitions locally and nationally. Fasika has over 10 years of community engagement and organizing experience in the Chicago area, which began with the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago, where she served as Board President from 2009 to 2012. Prior to joining UAO, Fasika held a post-Doc position with the National Mentoring Resource Center, at the University of Illinois at Chicago, a Department of Justice funded initiative aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of youth mentoring programs across the United States through the translation and dissemination of evidence-based practices.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Geoffrey Soyiantet

A native of Kenya, Soyiantet moved to St. Louis after graduating from college in Nairobi. He has a bachelor's in economics and master's in business administration from Lindenwold University.

Geoffrey is the founder and executive director of the nonprofit Vitendo4Africa, becoming the lifeline for African immigrants through educational and outreach programs in Missouri. He is co-founder and the Board Chair of St. Louis African Chamber of Commerce and also serves on the advisory committee of St. Louis Mosaic Project. Geoffrey sits on several other boards in St. Louis and still finds time to host cultural events, sit on community education panels, and answer the call when a collaborative opportunity arises.

Geoffrey has received numerous awards and recognitions including Champion of Diversity and Inclusion by St Louis Business Journal, and many others. Geoffrey continues to work hard to promote immigrant entrepreneurs and community integration in St. Louis.

Health and Wellness/Covid and Mental Health



Dr. Ibrahim A. Elemo

Graduate of Gondar College of Medical Sciences and AAU, Ethiopia. Dr. Elemo worked as a GP in his native area, researched the roles of traditional institutions in HIV/AIDS prevention and Reproductive health promotion and published articles and books on the topic. He served as the Director of Oromiya HIV Prevention Office. He was the winner of Ethiopian Medical Association's 2005 Award for best scientific paper of the year. Dr. Elemo taught as an adjunct professor at City Colleges of Chicago before joining residency training in Internal Medicine. Dr. Elemo is a strong advocate for human rights and empowerment of disenfranchised communities in his native country. He served as a Board of Director on various Oromo Community organizations in USA. He was the President of Oromo Studies Association, and founding member and President Elect of the International Oromo Health Professionals. He is a Board Certified IM Physician and Fellow of American College of Physicians.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Dr. David O. Fakunle



Dr. Mardia Stone

Dr. Mardia Stone is a highly regarded executive-level public health consultant, author, and researcher. A skilled thought leader with a proven record of contributing strategic vision to national policies and international discourse, she is expert in health and social policy development and disease prevention in post-conflict countries. Dr. Stone has extensive background consulting in Africa, Europe and the US, for Government, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private organizations. A skilled researcher, accomplished author, and public speaker, she has spoken extensively about public health concerns and is highly experienced mentoring graduate-level students and medical practitioners. A broadcast journalist prior to her medical practice, she is an effective communicator. Dr. Stone currently serves as Senior Consultant/ Advisor to the Division of Global Psychiatry, Boston University School of Medicine/ Boston Medical Center.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Dr. Gelane Gemechisa

Dr. Gelane Gemechisa graduated from University of Pennsylvania, Family Medicine Residency and University of Maryland School of Medicine. While a student there, she had the opportunity to spend 6 months in Ethiopia, a country where she has familial ties. Dr. Gemechisa is Board Certified by American Board of Family Medicine Functional Medicine Training: Institute for Functional Medicine Certified Life Coach, Life Coach Training Institute, San Diego, CA.

Dr. Gemechisa was also engaged in significant research work in Maryland and in Ethiopia involving emergency room care. At graduation, she received the Drs. Milton and Ann Ginsberg Memorial Award. In her spare time, Gelane enjoys singing, ballroom dancing, running, volunteering, professional soccer, cooking and history.

Wealth Building with Financial Investment Tools



Mihailo (Mike) Temali

Founding Executive Director of North End Area Revitalization (1984-1990); Founding President and CEO of Neighborhood Development Center (1992 - 2020); Founding President and CEO of Build from Within Alliance (2021 - present). Masters of Public Affairs, University of MN, Humphrey Institute. VISTA Volunteer with Inland Counties Legal Services, San Bernardino, CA.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Ebba Tilahun

Ebba Tilahun was born in Ethiopia and migrated to the US when he was 12 years old. He lives in Saint Paul, MN, with his beautiful wife, Torey Tilahun.

Ebba has been in financial services for over a decade. His experiences are in audit, risk management, quantitative analytics, wealth management, financial planning and investment portfolio management. Ebba is the founder of a Wealth Advisory practice called Beka Wealth Advisors. His firm's mission is to help and guide people to gain clarity and direction in their financial life, and he is 100% focused on that mission.



Watchen Bruce

Watchen Harris Bruce is the President and CEO of Baltimore Community Lending BCL), a nonprofit mission-based lender & certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). BCL provides loans and technical assistance to small businesses and affordable housing developers in underserved & advantaged low-income communities in the Baltimore area. Ms. Bruce has over thirty-five plus years of banking, development finance, small business lending, economic development, international development, affordable housing, and leadership experience. She has extensive development finance experience, both nationally and internationally. Prior to joining BCL, she served as Chief of Party/Country Director of the USAID-funded project "Investing for Business Expansion" (IBEX) project, access to finance, and business development project in Liberia for five years. She also served as Deputy Chief of the Party for another USAID-funded project "Liberia Agribusiness Development Activity" for 3 years. On the national level, Ms. Bruce served as Vice President at several national banks in the U.S.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Dr. Bruce Corrie

Dr. Bruce Corrie is a leading Twin Cities-based economist, business expert, cultural entrepreneur, and longtime member of the Concordia University, St. Paul faculty. His research and his teaching as a professor has helped shape views and perspectives on critical policy issues, including alternative perspectives that drive greater cultural intelligence in academia and the general public. He helped launch the ALANA Community Brain Trust to bring capital, build capacity and collaborate around building wealth in minority communities. Dr. Corrie is also a noted business consultant as the Principal at The Innovative Edge, LLC. He serves currently on the board of Opportunity and Growth Institute of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Midway Chamber of Commerce, Union Park District Council, Junior Achievement and the Minnesota Museum of American Art. Dr. Corrie received his PH.D. from the University of Notre Dame, and his M.A. in Economics from North-Eastern Hill University in Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY



Ethan Roberts

Ethan is the JCRC's Deputy Executive Director and the principal lobbyist for Minnesota's Jewish community. Over the course of his tenure with the JCRC, Ethan has secured millions of state and federal dollars for the social service agencies of the Twin Cities Jewish community, and protected and increased incentives for charitable giving.

In 2013, Ethan was awarded the Leon & Sylvia Sorkin Jewish Communal Professional Achievement Award by the Minneapolis Jewish Federation. In 2010, Ethan received the inaugural Len Lieberman Professional of the Year Award from the Association of Jewish Community State Government Affairs Directors for his national leadership. Ethan is a graduate of Stanford Law School and Macalester College, as well as an alum of Hebrew University's Rothberg International School. Ethan has served on multiple nonprofit boards including as an officer for the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and Hillel at Stanford.

Building African immigrants' collective power through civic engagement and public policies

SESSION MODERATOR

SESSION SPEAKERS



Rep. Mohamoud Noor

Mohamud Noor represents District 60B in the Minnesota House of Representative. District 60B includes the University of Minnesota, Augsburg University and the Marcy-Holmes, Prospect Park, Como, and Cedar-Riverside neighborhoods in Minneapolis. He was elected to serve in 2018.

As Chair of the Workforce and Economic Development Committee, Noor is responsible for advancing economic opportunity for Minnesotans, and supporting job creation and business growth.

Noor devotes his time to advocating for families, children, youth, students, seniors, people with disabilities, and workers. He is committed to amplifying the unique voices of young people and all his constituents. Noor is a native of Somalia, he migrated to the United States in 1999 and has called Minneapolis his home. He lives in the Southeast Como neighborhood with his wife, Farhiya Del, who is an educator with the Minneapolis Public Schools, and their four children.



Isaac Russel

Isaac Russell brings nearly 10 years of legislative and policy leadership to his position as the Center's Director of Public Policy. Isaac develops and leads the Center's public policy strategies and objectives to close racial wealth gaps and catalyze an inclusive and equitable economy.

Isaac served as a Legislative Assistant in the Minnesota State Senate from 2013 to 2022. During his legislative career, Isaac worked for several State Senators, including former Senate Minority Leader Susan Kent. These positions allowed Isaac to work on wide array of public policies, including commerce, education, and economic development.

Isaac received a double major in Political Science in History from the University of Wisconsin at River Falls. Isaac later received his Master's in Public Policy from the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs, where he advanced his skills of multi-disciplinary policy analysis, policy research, and political analysis.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Robert Agyemang

Robert Agyemang is the New York Director for ACT. Robert previously served as Director of External Affairs for NYSFAH working to advance pro-affordable housing policies and legislation at the city, state and federal level. Robert also served as Director of Communications for New York State Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte, as National Director of Governance for the Actors' Equity Association and as Campaign Manager and strategist for several successful New York-based electoral campaigns. Robert is a co-founder of the Council of Young African Leaders, and received a Master of Arts in Political Science, Urban Policy and Public Administration and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Africana Studies, all from Brooklyn College. Robert is Ghanaian-American and a native of Brooklyn.

YOUTH IN LEADERSHIP



Ian Oundo

Ian Oundo is a Ugandan-American, community builder, social entrepreneur, and a systems shifter.

Born and raised in the East-African country Uganda, Ian is passionate about advocating for issues he deeply cares about. As the Deputy Political Director, and later as the Civic Engagement Director for the Minnesota Democratic Party, Ian worked closely with faith leaders, elected officials, community organizations, as well as community leaders/stakeholders, to build strong partnerships in communities of color, marginalized, black and brown communities, and bringing people together to speak a common language and align their efforts.

Ian is the Owner & Principal at Makesi Creative Strategies, LLC. A leading public affairs, communications, policy, and research services firm in Minnesota and the Midwest. Ian is a recipient of the Voices Magazine 2020 Outstanding Accomplishment, Community Advocacy Award, as well as the Global Fatherhood Foundation 2022 Outstanding Achievement in Family Supportive Role Award.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Marcus Pope

Marcus Pope works closely with the President and Board of Directors to execute Youthprise's strategic priorities. Having joined Youthprise in 2011, Marcus has been an integral part of Youthprise's success as he has formed key partnerships with nonprofits, government agencies, and grantmaking entities to create opportunities for youth throughout Minnesota. He began his tenure with Youthprise as Director of Strategic Initiatives and Outreach. In 2017, Marcus was promoted to Vice President of the organization.

In 2020, Marcus received a Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal's 40 Under 40 Award for his leadership and service to the Twin Cities community. Marcus earned an interdisciplinary undergraduate degree in Sociology, Youth Studies, and African American studies and a Master's degree from the U of M in Education – Youth Development Leadership, with an emphasis in Program Evaluation. He also holds a Mini-MBA from the University of St. Thomas' Opus College of Business.



Aisatou Diallo

Aisatou Diallo is the Legal Director at ACT's NYC office. She was born and raised in the Bronx to two Guinean parents. Aisatou has several years experience working in the nonprofit sector representing people in detention facilities and people incarcerated with immigration detainers in immigration courts throughout New York and New Jersey. Prior to joining ACT, Aisatou opened a solo practice to help provide access to immigration information and legal assistance to the Fulani community in the Bronx area. Aisatou is fluent in Fulani.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Tiger Worku

Tiger Worku offers a unique perspective on the challenges and aspirations of Generation Z. Mr. Worku represents a shift in American politics that researchers have yet to fully understand. He is currently running to represent Ward 6 on Minneapolis City Council.



Mohammed Ademo

Mohammed Ademo is a Washington, D.C.-based freelance journalist, social media consultant and proud alumnus of Columbia Journalism School, and Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. Prior to Columbia, he studied at the University of Minnesota Duluth where he received a dual degree in International Studies and Political Science, cum laude, in 2008. Born and raised in Ethiopia's Oromia region, Ademo is also the co-founder and Editor-In-Chief of OPride.com, a multimedia website that aggregates Oromo, Ethiopian and Horn of Africa news. He writes regular news commentaries and Op-Eds on current issues that affect the Oromo people in Ethiopia. His articles have appeared on the New York Times, Foreign Policy, Al Jazeera, the Mail and Guardian, African Arguments, Africa Is A Country, Columbia Journalism Review, The New York Daily News, and several African and Ethiopian websites.

AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS DATA AND IMPLICATIONS



Samuel Ndely

Born and raised in Minneapolis, MN, and a proud Alum of the University of Minnesota, Twin-Cities, Samuel Ndely graduated from the School of Journalism with a Degree in Strategic Communications with a focus of Advertising & Public Relations in 2012. Samuel serves as a Philanthropic Advisor for The Minneapolis Foundation, leading partnerships with individuals, families, and businesses to invest in creating strong, vibrant communities through a lens of racial equity and economic prosperity. He also serves as an Executive Board Member for the Minnesota Black Chamber of Commerce & Membership Chair, Turn-Signl Advisory Board, and others. Samuel recently joined the University of Minnesota's Alumni Association's Committee on Inclusion and Belonging. He is a 2017 Josie R. Johnson Leadership Academy Fellow through the African American Leadership Forum. He currently serves on the Alumni Advisory Committee for the Leadership Academy. Additionally, he is a proud member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

SESSION CO-PRESENTERS



Dr. Bruce Corrie

Dr. Bruce Corrie is a leading Twin Cities-based economist, business expert, cultural entrepreneur, and longtime member of the Concordia University, St. Paul faculty. His research and his teaching as a professor has helped shape views and perspectives on critical policy issues, including alternative perspectives that drive greater cultural intelligence in academia and the general public. He helped launch the ALANA Community Brain Trust to bring capital, build capacity and collaborate around building wealth in minority communities. Dr. Corrie is also a noted business consultant as the Principal at The Innovative Edge, LLC. He serves currently on the board of Opportunity and Growth Institute of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Midway Chamber of Commerce, Union Park District Council, Junior Achievement and the Minnesota Museum of American Art. Dr. Corrie received his PH.D. from the University of Notre Dame, and his M.A. in Economics from North-Eastern Hill University in Shillong, Meghalaya, India.



Dr. Gene Gelgelu

AEDS founder and CEO

SESSION PRESENTERS



Dr. Desta A. Gelgelu

Dr. Desta A. Gelgelu is an economics professor at North Hennepin Community College and Metropolitan State University. Dr. Gelgelu received his BSc from Addis Ababa University, MA, and PhD in economics from University of Pune, India. He earned MBA in Finance from Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis, Minnesota. His studies mainly focus on monetary and international economics.

Dr. Gelgelu has special interest in reading and researching on revitalization the economy of East Africa. Before coming to the United States, he served as economics professor, academic dean, and acting president of Ethiopia Adventist College. He successfully led the process of transforming the two-year college to a four-year degree offering college. His extensive travel has given him rich experience in understanding diverse culture and how the culture of a society contribute to economic growth. Dr. Gelgelu believes that dissemination of knowledge and skill is one of the ways to transform the life of a community.



Dr. Martha Lagac

I am a broadly trained cultural anthropologist who conducted her PhD fieldwork in northern Uganda studying motorcycle taxi drivers who grew up during an armed insurgency. As research manager with African Communities Together, I conduct quantitative and qualitative research on the histories, issues, and interests of African (voluntary) immigrants in New York and to some extent in the US more broadly. In my spare time I am co-editing a journal's special issue about mobilities and migration in and beyond Africa.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE



Barbara Hall

Barbara Sue Hall, Principal and Owner of Cullasaja Synergy Consulting, LLC, offers Strategic Thought Partnership, Outcomes-Centered Program Design and Development, Evaluation, Market Research, and Grant Research and Writing Services. She brings over 28 years of experience working in the nonprofit sector with leading affordable housing, real estate development, workforce development, community development, and other groups in communities across the country, helping them secure millions in funding and implementing ongoing programs and short-term projects. Barbara focuses her work on supporting emerging and small organizations to leapfrog to their next stage of growth and amplifying their impacts.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Dr. Fatima Lawson

Dr. Fatima Lawson is a very dedicated educational leader. Raised in a predominantly Muslim community in Kano, Nigeria, she beat all odds to pursue western education resulting in her career choice. She has taught in all levels of schooling, and is an advocate for girls and women's education and social justice. Among the highlights of her career is helping to start one of the most successful language immersion schools in Saint Paul, where she served as its principal for 12 years. She is also very proud to have taken another school out of corrective action. She is especially interested in making sure that every child, rich or poor, is given access and opportunity to succeed. She served for two terms on the Governor's Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage, and very active in various community organizations in Minnesota and beyond. She is the recipient of many academic and community awards.



Dr. Jeremiah Okari

Dr. Jeremiah Okari is a passionate educator, a firm believer in expanding higher educational opportunities, and an advocate for global citizenship. Jeremiah has over a decade of experience in corporate finance and analytics. Moreover, he has twenty years of teaching experience in the United States and Kenya—at high school, undergraduate, and graduate levels. Jeremiah's research interests are in the dynamic role of immigrant communities not only in transforming rundown neighborhoods into vibrant business hubs but also as a potent catalyst for national and global economic development.

Dr. Okari is a Host & Presenter of the Diaspora Dive Show on KDRTV World News.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Mr. Fantalle Suli

Originally from Ethiopia. Currently living in Missouri and working with Vitendo4Africa as a program Manager. My duties and responsibilities are: Plan the overall program. Manage program reporting and budget. Research prospects for funding, grant development, and applications. Ensure compliance with federal guidelines through monitoring and evaluation and ensure equity and inclusion throughout internal and external programs. Successful grants on Refugee and Immigrant Adolescents mental health, Health access and care for new Americans, Economic justice for new Americans and Financial literacy education, Adult Education, Early Child education and Child care in the case of newly arrived Americans and Youth empowerment. Oversight program implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Received Master of Social Work Health Concentration (MSW) from Washington University in Saint Louis (2019) and MA in Nonprofit Leadership from Webster University in Saint Louis, Missouri (2018).



Grace Mobosi-Enwesi

Grace feels her proudest accomplishment is that of being a mother and grandmother to her three fabulous daughters and adorable grandchildren. She also takes pride in giving back to her community. She has been an educator for more than 20 years and passionately believes in molding, educating, and impacting the next generation.

Grace has received a Bachelor of Science from the University of Minnesota, a teaching certification, and a Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction from Concordia St. Paul. She is currently a doctorate candidate at Bethel University and is getting her administrative license in K12 education. Grace is currently president of the Minnesota Institute for Nigerian Development(MIND). MIND is the umbrella organization for Nigerians in Minnesota to foster unity through social, educational, and economic development. She is also currently the Financial Secretary for Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc. Gamma Tau Chapter. She firmly believes that empowering women strengthens the community.

Small Bussiness and Economic Development:- Community Ownership/Cooperative Model



Dr. Naigow Kuyon

Dr. Naigow Kuyon is Workforce Development and Strategic Partnership Program Manager at African Economic Development Solutions

SESSION SPEAKERS



Teshite Morke

Teshite Wako is a long-time community servant, volunteer, and nonprofit leader. He has tremendously contributed to the development of business community and supported so many immigrants to settle, open businesses and get jobs. He advocated for the betterment of Human Rights across the globe in general and Africa in particular.

He is President and CEO of Maatii Accounting & Financial Services.



Mark Fick He

Mark Fick is a Senior Loan Officer with Shared Capital Cooperative where he works with business development, loan underwriting, technical assistance and portfolio management functions of the organization. Shared Capital works to build economic democracy by providing financing throughout the United States to cooperatively owned enterprises including consumer, worker, and producer owned cooperatives. Prior to joining Shared Capital, Mark was Director of Lending Operations with the Chicago Community Loan Fund. Over the past 30 years Mark has been an active leader with a variety of cooperatively-owned and community-based enterprises, working to build an equitable and democratic economy.

SESSION SPEAKERS



Nonkululeko Shongwe

Nonkululeko Shongwe is an organizer, facilitator, and cooperative enthusiast. She works at Nexus Community Partners as the Community Wealth Building Director. Her work focuses on engaging and expanding community wealth-building strategies through BIPOC Cooperative education and technical support to expand opportunities for cooperation and ownership. Nonkululeko graduated from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs with a Master of Human Rights degree. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality studies from Ohio University.



TSEGAYE E. GELGELU

Director, Community Building and
Advocacy (AEDS)

On behalf of the organizing team of the 3rd National African leadership Conference, I would like to thank and welcome all in-person and online participants, staff members, volunteers, sponsors, other outside organizations, and stakeholders for participating in this highly important and timely conference. Once again, thank you all!

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