



Meet the Keynote Speakers for the 2021 Virtual Conference

The 2021 Community Development Society Virtual Conference will be held online July 12-15, 2021. The virtual conference will feature five amazing keynote speakers who will speak on important topics related to the conference theme, “Global Challenges, Local Resilience.” Each keynote address will be followed by a panel discussion focused on local resilience and/or facilitator-led, small group discussions. We are very excited for each of these speakers to share their unique experiences and knowledge with everyone during this year’s virtual conference.



Krish O'Mara Vignarajah on the global challenge of immigration

Krish is the President and CEO of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. She previously served in the Obama White House as Policy Director for First Lady Michelle Obama and at the State Department as Senior Advisor under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of State John Kerry. Krish has committed her career to public service because she knows how differently life could have turned out. Krish was 9-months old when she and her family escaped a country on the brink of civil war and built a life in Maryland. Her parents came to this country with no jobs and \$200 in their pockets.



Jessica Hellman on the global challenge of climate change

Jessica is the Director of the Institute on Environment at the University of Minnesota, where she holds the Ecolab Environment Research Chair. As director, she provides overall strategic leadership for the Institute, an internationally recognized organization working to solve grand environmental challenges, while promoting

interdisciplinary research, teaching and leadership across the university and engaging external partners and stakeholders. She is also the Russell M. and Elizabeth M. Bennett Chair in Excellence in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior. Her research examines adaptation and vulnerability of biological species to climate change. She earned her Ph.D. in biology from Stanford University and served as a postdoctoral fellow at Stanford's Center for International Security and Cooperation and the University of British Columbia's Centre for Biodiversity Research. She is an alumna of Stanford's Leopold Environmental Leadership Program and a recipient of a career enhancement fellowship from the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.



Ron Wirtz on the global challenge of COVID-19 and its impact on the economy

Ron is a regional outreach director at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Ron's primary responsibilities involve tracking current business conditions, with a focus on employment and wages, along with sector-tracking in construction, real estate, consumer spending and tourism. In this role, Ron networks with local businesses in a six-state region, both in person and via various communication channels, and gathers other traditional and nontraditional sources of

information to assess current business activity. Ron also gives customized speeches on regional economic activity and handles advance planning for regular outreach trips to Ninth District communities by Bank President Neel Kashkari. Prior to this role, Ron was the long-time editor of the fedgazette, the Bank's regional business and economics publication, where he conducted research on such topics as employment trends, health care pricing and consolidation, housing, entrepreneurship, public pensions, income mobility, the Bakken oil boom and other topics.



S. Atyia Martin on community resilience and racial justice

Atyia is the CEO and Founder of All Aces, Inc., an education social enterprise with a mission to activate the power of consciousness, critical thinking, and community to catalyze transformative action that advances racial equity and resilience. All Aces provides its clients with speaking engagements, coaching, strategic workshops, and an online learning community, [DynamIQImpact.com](https://dynamIQimpact.com). Additionally, Dr. Martin serves as a Distinguished Senior Fellow at Northeastern University's Global Resilience Institute. As a certified emergency manager, her previous professional roles include Chief Resilience Officer for the City of Boston, director of the Office of Public Health Preparedness at the Boston Public

Health Commission, and adjunct faculty in the Master of Homeland Security at Northeastern University. Dr. Martin has also held positions at the Boston Police Department's Boston Regional Intelligence Center; City of Boston's Mayor's Office of Emergency Management; the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); the Air Force as active duty assigned to the National Security Agency; and the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City. Dr. Martin and her husband were born and raised in Boston where they currently live. They co-founded Next Leadership Development Corporation, a nonprofit focused on building resilience in Black households and communities. They have five children, two still at home.



Jane South on community resilience to the COVID pandemic

Jane is Professor of Healthy Communities at Leeds Beckett University, UK and also works with Public Health England (PHE) as their National Adviser on Communities. Her research focuses on volunteering and how community life contributes to good health. Starting her professional life as a nurse, Jane later moved into health promotion research and from 2006-2013 was Director of the Centre for Health Promotion Research at her university. In the UK, Jane has been

at the forefront of establishing an evidence base for community-centered and asset-based approaches in health. During the pandemic, she has advocated for the importance of community action and community resilience as key to public health efforts. Jane is passionate about research that makes a difference on the ground and

set up an innovative Community-Campus Partnership for Health at her university. She became a Fellow of the Faculty of Public Health in 2015.

Don't forget - registration for this year's virtual conference is open on the CDS website at: <https://cvent.me/YgLbX0>.