



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PENN IUR ANNOUNCES THE 16TH ANNUAL URBAN LEADERSHIP FORUM

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA— The Penn Institute for Urban Research (Penn IUR) is proud to present the 16th annual Urban Leadership Forum, at which Penn IUR recognizes leaders who are guiding cities toward a sustainable and vibrant future. The awardees are Yvonne Aki-Sawyers, Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol, England.

Penn IUR will honor the work of these exceptional leaders on April 6th at 2:30-3:30 pm ET at its 16th annual Urban Leadership Forum entitled “Mayoral Leadership in Challenging Times.” To attend the Urban Leadership Forum, which will be held online, please register at the Penn IUR [website](#).

About the Awardees

Yvonne Aki-Sawyers became Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone in May 2018 with a commitment to transform Freetown using an inclusive, data-driven approach to address challenges in the city. Her three-year *Transform Freetown Plan*, launched in January 2019, details 19 concrete targets across 11 sectors and covers issues ranging from waste management and housing to improving urban planning, tackling environmental degradation, and facilitating the creation of jobs in the tourism sector. A finance professional with over 25 years of private sector experience in strategic planning and management, Mayor Aki-Sawyers’ public sector engagement began with her work as the Director of Planning at the National Ebola Response Centre during the Ebola epidemic of 2014-2015 and her subsequent role as Delivery Team Lead for the President’s Recovery Priorities—the second phase of a multi-stakeholder program to drive socio-economic recovery in Sierra Leone after Ebola. Her advocacy and charity contributions include campaigning against the trade in “blood diamonds” during the Sierra Leone civil war and, in 1999, co-founding the Sierra Leone War Trust for Children (SLWT), which continues to support disadvantaged children in Sierra Leone today.

Marvin Rees was sworn in as Mayor of Bristol, England in May 2016, becoming the first person of Black African-Caribbean descent to be elected mayor of a major European city. With a commitment to creating a fairer and more inclusive city, his priorities are to tackle Bristol’s housing crisis by building more homes, to improve transportation and mobility, to ensure early intervention in health, and to progress social mobility through education and supporting business to identify and connect with talent from disadvantaged communities. His *One City Plan for Bristol* brings together the organizations and groups with the largest footprint in the city to better work together and agree to overarching shared city aims and coordinate solutions to the challenges facing the city as a whole. He began his career with Tearfund, one of the UK’s leading international development agencies, subsequently working in Washington, D.C. on the response of faith-based organizations to President Clinton’s Welfare Reform Bill. He later worked in both public health and radio broadcasting, becoming a journalist at BBC Radio Bristol. He founded the City Leadership Programme in 2012, which invests in the development of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and continues as its director.

About the Penn IUR Urban Leadership Award

Since 2005, Penn IUR has recognized innovators in urban affairs through its Urban Leadership Award. Past recipients include (in reverse chronological order):

- **Inga Saffron**, Journalist and Architecture Critic, *Philadelphia Inquirer* (2020)
- **Egbert Perry**, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, Integral, LLC (2019)
- **Mauricio Rodas**, Mayor, Quito, Ecuador (2019)
- **Elizabeth Julian**, Founder and Senior Counsel, Inclusive Communities Project; former Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2018)
- **Rose Molokoane**, Coordinator, South African Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP); Deputy President and Management Committee; Member, Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI); Co-Chair, UN-Habitat's World Urban Campaign (WUC) (2017)
- **Victor Santiago Pineda**, President, World ENABLED; Adjunct Professor, Department of City and Regional Planning, University of California-Berkeley (2017)
- **Angela Glover Blackwell**, President & CEO, PolicyLink (2016)
- **Jeremy Nowak**, President, J Nowak and Associates (2016)
- **Michael A. Nutter**, Mayor, City of Philadelphia (2015)
- **Renée Lewis Glover**, Chair, Board of Directors, Habitat for Humanity International; former President and CEO, Atlanta Housing Authority (2015)
- **Sister Mary Scullion and Joan Dawson McConnon**, Co-Founders, Project HOME (2014)
- **Martin O'Malley**, Governor of Maryland (2014)
- **Joan Clos**, Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-HABITAT) (2013)
- **Yael Lehmann**, Executive Director, The Food Trust (2013)
- **Ridwan Kamil**, Founder and Principal, Urbane Indonesia (2013)
- **Derek R.B. Douglas**, Vice President for Civic Engagement, University of Chicago and former Special Assistant to President Barack Obama, White House Domestic Policy Council (2012)
- **Paul Levy**, President and CEO, Philadelphia's Center City District (2012)
- **Lily Yeh**, Global Artist and Founder, Barefoot Artists (2012)
- **Raphael Bostic**, Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2011)
- **Henry Cisneros**, Executive Chairman, CityView, and former Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2011)
- **Jane Golden**, Executive Director, City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program (2011)
- **John Timoney**, former Miami Chief of Police and author, *Beat Cop to Top Cop: A Tale of Three Cities* (2011)
- **William Hudnut III**, Senior Fellow Emeritus, Urban Land Institute; former Mayor, Indianapolis, Indiana (2010)
- **Shirley Franklin**, Mayor, City of Atlanta, Georgia (2009)
- **Parris Glendening**, President, Smart Growth Leadership Institute; former Governor, Maryland (2009)
- **Bruce Katz**, Vice President and Founding Director of the Metropolitan Policy Program, The Brookings Institution (2009)
- **Edward J. Blakely**, Executive Director, Mayor's Office of Recovery and Development Administration, City of New Orleans (2008)
- **M. Susan Savage**, Secretary of State, Oklahoma (2008)

- **Donna E. Shalala**, President, University of Miami; former Secretary, US Department of Health and Human Services (2008)
- **Joseph P. Riley, Jr.**, Mayor, City of Charleston, South Carolina (2007)
- **James Lee Witt**, Chairman and CEO, James Lee Witt Associates, a Part of GlobalOptions Group (2006)
- **Brent Warr**, Mayor, City of Gulfport, Mississippi (2006)
- **Loree D. Jones**, Secretary of External Affairs, Office of the Mayor, Philadelphia (2006)
- **Manuel A. Diaz**, Mayor, City of Miami (2005)
- **Stephen Goldsmith**, Former Mayor, City of Indianapolis (2005)
- **Marc H. Morial**, Former Mayor, City of New Orleans (2005)
- **John F. Street**, Mayor, City of Philadelphia (2005)

About Penn IUR

The Penn Institute for Urban Research (Penn IUR) is dedicated to advancing cross-disciplinary urban-focused research, instruction, and civic engagement on issues relevant to cities around the world. As the global population becomes increasingly urban, understanding cities is vital to informed decision-making and public policy at the local, national, and international levels. Penn IUR focuses on research that informs the sustainable and inclusive 21st century city. By providing a forum for collaborative scholarship and instruction at Penn and beyond, Penn IUR stimulates research and engages with urban practitioners and policymakers to inform urban policy.

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