



News Release
For Immediate Distribution
November 19, 2019

Contact: Donald Gatlin, dgatlin@rabengroup.com, 202-587-2871

UChicago Convenes Philanthropy, Policy, Business, and Community Leaders at Forum on Ending Urban Inequality on November 19-20
Urban America Forward series focuses on local solutions to racial and economic exclusion

CHICAGO, IL— Today, the University of Chicago convened philanthropic, national, and local leaders from Chicago and other cities across the country for *Urban America Forward: Equity Solutions in Place*, the third in a series of *Urban America Forward* gatherings hosted by UChicago since 2015, focused on advancing prosperity for all in American cities.

“As an urban research and anchor institution, the University of Chicago is committed to expanding opportunity on the South Side of Chicago, in the City of Chicago, and in cities across the country and the globe”, said **Derek Douglas, vice president for civic engagement and external affairs at the University of Chicago**. “This Urban America Forward convening is an essential forum for us because it elevates evidence-based, and community-based solutions that can be scaled to engender greater equity for urban residents across the country.”

This year’s convening will explore the insights, methods, challenges, and tools for improving equity and inclusive growth in urban communities through a series of diverse panel discussions and Ted-style presentations featuring renowned researchers and equity practitioners. The first day of the two-day convening will address community-driven solutions to transforming cities, including best practices for promoting community agency in economic policymaking, strengthening civic infrastructure, and expanding access to capital in disinvested communities.

Day two discussions will focus on the role of the public and private sectors in community transformation, including leveraging federal and state dollars and policy priorities to advance equity, and inspiring business leaders to change hiring, procurement, and mentorship practices to reach the most vulnerable populations. A full schedule of events is available [here](#).

“This week’s *Urban America Forward* convening reflects a shared commitment among civic, nonprofit and philanthropic leaders to identify equity-minded strategies that advance shared prosperity in cities nationwide,” said **Rip Rapson, president and CEO of the Kresge Foundation**. “Platforms such as this enable city leaders from an array of sectors to gather, ideate and identify much-needed new approaches to increasing economic inclusiveness.”

It is well documented that expanding access to economic opportunity and upward mobility remains one of the nation's greatest challenges, despite a strong national economy overall. The Brookings Institution reports that incomes among the nation's wealthiest families increased roughly 90 percent from 1963 to 2016, as compared to an increase of less than 10 percent for the nation's families with the least wealth during this same period. According to the Urban Institute, a growing share of urban communities, particularly communities of color, are experiencing structural and multi-dimensional exclusion from the jobs, education, and other opportunities necessary to move up the economic ladder. Prosperity is uneven across geographies. Disparities for people of color persist, and are likely to get worse over the next decade. *Urban America Forward: Equity Solutions in Place* aims to provide a forum for policy, philanthropy, and community leaders to examine and share place-based solutions to these alarming trends.

"Our research shows that Chicago's inequities are deep and entrenched, and fueled by racist policies and systems that make them among the worst in the nation," said **Helene Gayle, president and CEO of the Chicago Community Trust**. "As we kick off our strategic focus to close the racial and ethnic wealth gap, we look forward to discussing ideas and solutions that can enable individuals and families to build wealth and contribute to inclusive growth for our region. We hope our multifaceted approach to tackling the wealth gap will be a model for other metropolitan regions."

"This conference is so valuable because it shines a light on the ways cities — especially those in the South — can and are implementing policies and practices to advance racial equity and build brighter futures for children, families and communities," says **Charles Rutheiser, a senior associate at the Annie E. Casey Foundation**.

Urban America Forward: Equity Solutions in Place partners include the Harris School of Public Policy; the Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture; the School of Social Service Administration; The Annie E. Casey Foundation; and the Shared Prosperity Partnership, a collaboration of The Kresge Foundation, the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, the Urban Institute, and Living Cities.

#

The Urban America Forward program is a partnership between the University of Chicago Office of Civic Engagement; Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture; School of Social Service Administration; and Harris School of Public Policy. Urban America Forward marries a racial equity framework with evidence-informed urban policy and practice.