

## **Brown v. Board at 70: Fulfilling the True Promise of School Integration**

### **Speaker Bios**

*(in alphabetical order)*

**Alejandra Vázquez Baur** is a fellow at The Century Foundation, where she manages the Bridges Collaborative, an initiative that champions school integration. In 2022, she co-founded the National Newcomer Network, a coalition that brings together educators, researchers, and advocates invested in developing systemic solutions to address newcomer student inequity in K–12 schools. Under Alejandra’s leadership, the network released a policy platform in February 2024 representing the priorities of over 150 members from more than thirty U.S. states. An inaugural Obama USA Leader and former high school teacher, her work has been featured by several media outlets, including *Chalkbeat*, *The 74*, *K–12 Dive*, *Education Week*, *Gotham Gazette*, and *POLITICO*. Alejandra is a proud granddaughter of Mexican farmworkers and holds degrees from Claremont McKenna College and Columbia University.

**Saba Bireda**, Esq., is the co-founder of Brown’s Promise, an organization that works to increase equal access to educational resources and end segregation in K–12 schools. Before founding Brown’s Promise, she was a co-managing partner in the D.C. office of the civil rights law firm Sanford Heisler Sharp LLP. Ms. Bireda served as senior counsel in the Office for Civil Rights and the Office of the General Counsel at the U.S. Department of Education. She also served in legal and policy roles with EducationCounsel, LLC, the Poverty and Race Research Action Council, and the Center for American Progress. Ms. Bireda was a Philadelphia Bar Foundation Fellow, working as a litigation associate with Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, LLP and the Education Law Center as a staff attorney.

Ms. Bireda is a board member of Advocates for Justice and Education, the Washington Leadership Academy, the National Student Legal Defense Network, and Children’s National Hospital. In 2016, Mayor Muriel Bowser appointed her to serve on the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board. The *National Law Journal* named Ms. Bireda one of Washington, D.C.’s Rising Stars. The *Profiles in Diversity Journal* recognized her among its Women Worth Watching in Leadership and as a Black Leader Worth Watching. She was also selected to be an inaugural Blume Leader in Residence at Georgetown Law. Ms. Bireda received her bachelor of arts degree from Stanford University and her juris doctor from Harvard Law School.

**Val Brown**, EdD, is a director for a national nonprofit focused on catalyzing transformational change in education. Prior to assuming that position, Val served as the academic director for the Center for Antiracist Education, and the professional development manager for Learning for Justice. She is a co-host of the *Integrated Schools Podcast*.

## ***Brown v. Board at 70: Fulfilling the True Promise of School Integration***

**Commissioner Kristen Clarke** is the assistant attorney general for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Justice. In this role, she leads the department's broad federal civil rights enforcement efforts and works to uphold the civil and constitutional rights of all who live in America. Assistant Attorney General Clarke is a lifelong civil rights lawyer who has spent her entire career in public service. Throughout her career, Clarke has focused on work that seeks to strengthen our democracy by combating discrimination faced by African Americans and other marginalized communities. Her role involves ensuring civil liberties for all Americans. Clarke speaks and writes regularly on issues concerning race, law, and justice.

**Gina Chirichigno** specializes in school integration policy and organizing at the national, state, and local levels. She directs the National Coalition on School Diversity, housed at Poverty and Race Research Action Council. She originally joined PRRAC's staff as co-director of One Nation Indivisible, a documentation and organizing project. Past employers include Sheff Movement, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity (The Ohio State University), Charles Hamilton Houston Institute (Harvard Law School), and Education Action. She earned degrees from Hampshire College and Howard University School of Law. She served on Massachusetts' Racial Imbalance Advisory Council from 2009 to 2014 and was a founding member of Teacher Activist Group Boston.

**James E. Clyburn** is the U.S. congressman representing South Carolina's Sixth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives and chairman of the Democratic Faith Working Group. He previously served as assistant Democratic leader from 2011 to 2018 and 2023 to March 2024, and House majority whip from 2019 to 2022 and 2007 to 2010, making him the first African American to serve multiple terms as majority whip. A native son of South Carolina, Clyburn has represented the state's Sixth Congressional District since 1993. [Click here](#) for the full bio.

**Anna Cole** has been a member of the Roaring Fork Schools senior leadership team since the start of the pandemic, when the district prioritized the needs of students and families by elevating her to the role of chief of student and family services. The Roaring Fork Schools are fourteen small, rural schools serving the Colorado mountain towns of Glenwood Springs, Carbondale, and Basalt. Over 50 percent of Roaring Fork's nearly 6,000 students come from Spanish-speaking homes. In this role, Anna strengthens school-based resources for students and families through partnerships, a multidisciplinary student services team, and district teams (including a staff steering committee and student/family/community equity advisory committee). Anna stepped in as interim superintendent for the district in the 2023–2024 school year and was named permanent superintendent this spring.

## **Brown v. Board at 70: Fulfilling the True Promise of School Integration**

**Dr. Bernadine Futrell** is the deputy assistant secretary for equity and discretionary grants and support services at the U.S. Department of Education, where she leads and provides executive oversight for the department's equity development and placements, as well as for the discretionary grant policy and programs. Dr. Futrell was most recently the director for the Office of Head Start, which is housed by the Administration for Children and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Dr. Futrell began her career as an assistant Head Start teacher in Richmond, Virginia. She later became the senior director for effective practice at the National Head Start Association (NHSA), and also led the superintendent certification programs at the American Association of School Administrators before her time at NHSA. Dr. Futrell is an author, serves on university advisory committees, and attended Virginia Commonwealth University, George Mason University.

**Matt Gonzales** is a dynamic educator, organizer, and policy expert, serving as director of the Education Justice Research and Organizing Collaborative (EJROC) at NYU Metro Center. With a career dedicated to education justice, he collaborates with youth, parents, and educators to advocate for equity. Matt's impactful work spans policy and advocacy, notably in school integration and racial equity issues nationwide. Formerly a special education teacher at Bancroft Middle School in Los Angeles, he earned his master's in education policy from Teachers College, Columbia University in 2016.

**Damon T. Hewitt** is the president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Hewitt has more than twenty years of civil rights litigation and policy experience, including prior leadership roles in the nonprofit, philanthropic, and public sectors. Prior to joining the Lawyers' Committee, Hewitt was the inaugural executive director of the Executives' Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, as well as the chief liaison from the philanthropic community to the White House on policy issues impacting young men of color. Hewitt worked for more than a decade as an attorney at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, where he was lead counsel on a variety of litigation and policy matters and supervised teams of lawyers and policy experts. One of his most important cases, *Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center v. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*, catalyzed nearly \$500 million in new relief for Louisiana homeowners. Hewitt holds a BA in political science from Louisiana State University and a JD from the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

**Stefan Lallinger** is the executive director of Next100, a think tank that centers the voices of those closest to and most impacted by policy. Dr. Lallinger is also a senior fellow on The Century Foundation's K-12 Education team, where he is a strategic advisor to the Bridges Collaborative. He researches and writes on issues of racial and socioeconomic

## ***Brown v. Board at 70: Fulfilling the True Promise of School Integration***

integration, equity, affirmative action, selective public schools, school governance, and district–charter relations. As the first director of Bridges, he recruited more than fifty school districts and housing organizations that collectively serve more than 3 million students and families to join the inaugural cohort of leaders combating segregation in schools and neighborhoods. Dr. Lallinger also teaches courses on policy and desegregation at American University and serves on the board of Partners in Opportunity, an innovative housing mobility program.

Dr. Lallinger previously worked as a special assistant to Chancellor Richard Carranza in the New York City Department of Education and led Langston Hughes Academy, a pre-K-through-eighth-grade open-enrollment school in the Recovery School District in post-Katrina New Orleans, where he served as principal, assistant principal, and teacher for nine years. Inspired by his grandfather Louis Redding, a civil rights lawyer, Stefan has been a fierce advocate for integration and equity throughout his career.

**Andrew Lefkowitz** is a White dad from Denver and co-host of the *Integrated Schools Podcast*. He is also the co-chair of Park Hill Neighbors for Equity in Education, a group of parents, caregivers, and community members organizing for equity for the schools in the Park Hill neighborhood of Denver, Colorado.

**Vanessa Leung** is co-executive director of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF), the nation’s only pan-Asian children policy advocacy organization. She is dedicated to improving public education, advocating on behalf of Asian-American Pacific-Islander students and English language learners in New York City public schools. She served eight years as chair of New York City’s Panel for Educational Policy. Previously, as education policy and program coordinator of CACF, she authored “Hidden in Plain View,” a report detailing Asian-American students’ needs, and worked alongside other advocates on the creation of Chancellor’s Regulation A-663, mandating comprehensive interpretation and translation services, as well as the Dignity in All Schools Act, which reduces bias-based harassment in schools. Vanessa launched CACF’s high school youth leadership project, the Asian-American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP) that trains a diverse group of young people to be effective advocates.

**Halley Potter** is a senior fellow at The Century Foundation. She is an expert on school integration, preschool equity, charter schools, and college access and coauthor, with Richard D. Kahlenberg, of *A Smarter Charter: Finding What Works for Charter Schools and Public Education* (Teachers College Press, 2014). Halley’s writing has been published in numerous news outlets, including *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *US News*, and *Educational Leadership*, and she has appeared on *MSNBC* and public radio. Halley is a former elementary school teacher and a co-founder of the Diverse Charter Schools

## ***Brown v. Board at 70: Fulfilling the True Promise of School Integration***

Coalition, a grassroots advocacy and membership group supporting high-quality racially and economically integrated public charter schools. She is a first-generation college graduate with a bachelor's degree in religious studies from Yale University and is an alumnus of the Coro Leadership New York program.

**Terris Ross** is managing director of the AIR Equity Initiative. In this role, Dr. Ross is developing the long-term, substantive agenda of the Equity Initiative's work in education, where she provides intellectual and technical leadership to improve educational and economic opportunity, with a deep appreciation for the challenges faced by communities segregated by race or place. This includes oversight of the Educational Equity through Policy portfolio and building partnerships to connect AIR's work with policy, practice, and other researchers and funders. [Click here](#) for the full bio.

**Mark Zuckerman** is president of The Century Foundation. He served in the Obama White House as the deputy director of the Domestic Policy Council, leading teams on key initiatives, including reducing student debt, increasing accountability at for-profit educational institutions, reducing workplace discrimination, increasing wages for home health care workers, and expanding access to job training. Prior to that, as staff director of the House Education and Labor Committee, he helped win passage of landmark legislation such as the Affordable Care Act; the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act; the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act; and the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act.

# Brown v. Board at 70: Fulfilling the True Promise of School Integration

## Thank You to Our Sponsors!

### Premiere Sponsors (\$100,000 and below)



### Advocate Sponsors (\$25,000 and below)

**Sandra Wilcox Conway**



## Thank you to all who helped with this event!

### NCSd Member and Partner Contributors:

Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA, Education Law Center, Education Rights Center, Howard University School of Law, Othering & Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley, Institute for Social Progress at Wayne County, Community College District, Learning Policy Institute, Metropolitan Council for Educational, Opportunity, Inc. (METCO), NAACP Legal Defense Fund, New York Appleseed, Dudley Flood Center for Educational Equity and Opportunity at The Public School Forum of NC, The Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy, NC Justice Center, Metis Associates, Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford, Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), the Constitutional Law Center at the University of South Carolina Joseph F. Rice School of Law.

### TCF Bridges Collaborative Members:

Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership, Blackstone Valley Prep, Boston Collegiate Charter School, Cambridge Public Schools, Central Park School for Children, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Citizens of the World Charter Schools, City Garden Montessori School, Compass Charter School, DHA, Housing Solutions for North Texas, DSST, Elm City Communities/Housing Authority of the City of New Haven, Guilford County Schools, Hamden Public Schools, High Tech High, Hillsborough County Public Schools, Housing Choice Partners, HousingNOLA, ICP, Jefferson County Public Schools, KIPP Beyond Middle School, Larchmont Charter, Lycée Français de la Nouvelle-Orléans, METCO, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (School Choice and Parental Options Office), Milwaukee Public Schools, NestQuest Houston, New Haven Public Schools, NYC Community School District 13, NYC Community School District 3, Oakland Unified School District, Roaring Fork School District, Seattle Public Schools, Shaker Heights City School District, Stamford Public Schools, The Renaissance Charter School, The School District of Philadelphia, Tucson Unified School District, Urban Strategies, Wake County Public Schools, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, Yu Ming Charter School.