



FROM POVERTY TO
Possibilities

SPEAKERS
NOVEMBER 18, 2025



DR. MATTHEW DESMOND
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

MacArthur “Genius” and Princeton sociologist Matthew Desmond has transformed our understanding of poverty in the US with his instant #1 New York Times bestseller *Poverty, by America* and the 2017 Pulitzer Prize winner *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Praised as “an extraordinary feat of reporting and ethnography” by The Washington Post, *Evicted* draws on the stories of eight real families living on the edge of eviction to help readers better understand the causes and conditions of deep poverty.

Poverty, by America, has been celebrated by the New Yorker as “urgent and accessible” and by Esquire as “another paradigm-shifting inquiry into America’s dark heart.” Drawing on history, research, and original reporting, the book reimagines the debate on poverty and makes a new and bracing argument about why it persists in America: because the rest of us benefit from it. Desmond is the Maurice P. During Professor of Sociology and the founder and principal investigator of The Eviction Lab (www.evictionlab.org) at Princeton University. Desmond is a New York Times Magazine contributing writer, and his writing has appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, the New Yorker and The Chicago Tribune.



NATHE LAWVER
UNITED WAY PIERCE COUNTY BOARD
CHAIR, SECRETARY/TREASURER,
PIERCE COUNTY LABOR COUNCIL,
AFL-CIO

Nathe Lawver has been fighting for the hard-working women and men of Pierce County, for more than 15 years. He has served as Director level staff for two local unions in both the private retail sector and construction sector, securing better wages and working conditions through legislative processes.

In 2023, he was elected by his peers to be Secretary-Treasurer of the Pierce County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO. As the largest federation of organized labor, the PCCLC has 113 affiliated unions representing 46,000 workers who live and work in Pierce County. Nathe serves as the Chair of the Pierce County United Way Board, where he has been an active board member for 11 years. He enjoys reading, travelling, cooking and history, usually all at the same time. His wife, Alica, and three children live in the Tacoma area.



DONA PONEPINTO

**PRESIDENT AND CEO, UNITED WAY
OF PIERCE COUNTY**

Dona has been the President and CEO for United Way of Pierce County since 2014 and has been with the United Way movement for more than 30 years. Locally she led a groundbreaking tristate research project on the financial stability of families, deployed navigation specialists for South Sound 211, launched seven Center for Strong Families sites and serves on the Governor's Poverty Work Group. Currently, in partnership with the City of Tacoma, County and DSHS, she and her team are leading another Guaranteed Income Demonstration project.

Dona has consistently been very engaged in her community and has demonstrated strong leadership through service and board membership. She is a member of the Junior League Tacoma and is a past President of the Association of Junior Leagues International. In addition, she serves on the boards of the Tacoma Art Museum, Wellfound Behavioral Health Hospital, Coordinated Care, and the Workforce Development Council. In 2019, she was appointed by Governor Jay Inslee to serve as a Board of Trustee for Tacoma Community College and is currently chair of the Board. She was recently honored by the University of Washington Milgard School of Business as the 2024 Non-Profit Leader of the Year. Dona holds a BA in Psychology and an MS Degree in Counseling with an emphasis in children and families from Creighton University.



RYAN MELLO

PIERCE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Ryan Mello serves as the Pierce County Executive, leading with a "Forward Together" vision centered on safety, affordability, and opportunity for all.

Originally from Kailua, Hawaii, Ryan moved to Tacoma in 1997 to attend the University of Puget Sound, where he earned a BA. in Politics & Government. His commitment to service began early—after college he joined AmeriCorps and coordinated United Way of Pierce County's Youth United program. Before becoming County Executive, he represented District 4 on the Pierce County Council, serving Tacoma, Fircrest, and University Place.

From 2010 to 2019, Ryan served on the Tacoma City Council and chaired the Infrastructure, Planning & Sustainability Committee. Regionally, he has led the Puget Sound Regional Council's Growth Management Policy Board and the Pierce County Flood Control Zone District Advisory Committee.

Beyond elected service, Ryan has strengthened community institutions as Executive Director of the Pierce Conservation District and through leadership roles with the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, Equal Rights Washington, the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, Pierce Transit, and Metro Parks Tacoma.

Ryan and his partner, Sean, live in Tacoma's Theater District, where they enjoy the city's arts, culture, and easy access to outdoor recreation.

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CAROL C. MITCHELL, J.D.
FOUNDER, INSTITUTE FOR BLACK
JUSTICE

Carol holds a Juris Doctor from Seattle University School of Law, a Master of Arts in Organizational Systems Renewal from Seattle University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Washington Seattle. She founded the Institute for Black Justice (IBJ) in September 2020. The purpose of the IBJ is to relentlessly pursue equity and justice for all.

Mitchell has more than 20 years of public sector leadership experience, having served most recently in Pierce County, Washington. Her primary responsibility was to improve outcomes for individuals with behavioral health and substance use conditions who were caught in the grip of the criminal justice system. She has significant organizational and human resources experience, having served for the Port of Tacoma, Metro Parks, Pierce Transit, and as Executive Consultant for her own preventive law firm. Mitchell spent 17 years as the host of TV Tacoma's "CityLine," a public affairs talk show. Her volunteer activities are endless, she is proud to be in service to her community, to her soon-to-be-88-year-old mother, her 3 adult children and her 6 grandchildren.



MARCY BOWERS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, POVERTY
ACTION

Marcy serves as Poverty Action's Executive Director. She began as a volunteer with Poverty Action in 2001, came on staff in 2005, and took the reins in 2012. In her time at Poverty Action, she has played virtually every role in the organization, from recruiting and managing volunteers to coordinating our annual MLK Day Lobby Day, and from communications, policy work, and fundraising to leading and staffing local electoral and national community engagement campaigns. In her current role, she oversees day-to-day operations and leads a stellar staff and talented board in their work to implement our vision of an economically and socially just state.

Since becoming the Executive Director, Marcy has overseen critical policy wins including expansions of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, increased access to oral health, consumer protections around predatory lending, and the creation and funding of the Working Families Tax Credit. Marcy serves on the board of the Financial Empowerment Network, is the board chair of the Washington State Oral Health Coalition and is a member of the Solid Ground Leadership Team.

Marcy has deep organizing and policy experience having worked for social justice in Seattle, Texas, and Central America. Outside of work, Marcy enjoys being a Seattle stereotype with her love of hiking, running, biking, and coffee. Having grown up in Eastern Washington and believing Washington is the most beautiful state in the country, she enjoys exploring the region with her partner and two kiddos. Marcy holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and Women's Studies from the University of Washington.





KORBETT MOSESLY

ADVANCING | BUILDING THRIVING
COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT PLAN
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT
OF COMMERCE

Korbett is a strategic executive and equity-driven changemaker with 15+ years of experience advancing economic mobility, workforce development, and systems-level policy. His work lives at the intersection of public strategy and community empowerment—where real change happens.

Currently, Korbett leads Washington State's \$200 million Community Reinvestment Plan, directing transformative investments to address racial and economic disparities. Under his leadership, the state has launched innovative initiatives—including a \$25 million matched savings and financial coaching program—and distributed \$138 million in grants to fuel job growth, community development, and equitable opportunity.

Earlier in his career, Korbett led family stability and financial empowerment efforts at United Way of Pierce County, where he launched and scaled the Center for Strong Families initiative. This cross-sector collaboration united over 20 workforce and social service partners to deliver integrated coaching and support, helping families increase income, reduce debt, and move toward long-term self-sufficiency.

His track record spans workforce inclusion for justice-impacted individuals, equitable municipal policy, affordable housing leadership, and strategic investments across public, private, and nonprofit sectors. He's known for turning bold ideas into measurable outcomes, and for designing systems that work—especially for those historically left behind.

Korbett is also co-author of *My Plan: A Journal to Help You Shape a Vibrant, Successful Future*, and serves on numerous boards that reflect his values of shared power, equity, and community. He believes thriving communities aren't accidental—they're built on purpose, with policy and people aligned to drive generational impact.



KATHI LITTMANN

**PRESIDENT AND CEO,
GREATER TACOMA
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

A public, private and nonprofit leader with more than two decades of executive experience, Kathi joined the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation in 2015 as president and CEO. She has held prominent positions across a variety of fields, ranging from public education leadership to commercial construction management.

Throughout her career, Kathi has worked to build deep community involvement to create opportunities for people to live healthy, happy and productive lives. Whether she was building innovative, teacher-centered professional learning systems for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as a senior program officer, launching learning initiatives on U.S. military-base campuses around the world or managing multibillion-dollar construction programs, Kathi worked to empower teams of diverse stakeholders to collaborate toward a shared impact. She has been recognized for her team's work to launch 175 new schools and additions across Los Angeles (for which she received the Engineering News Record's Award of Excellence) and was a 2005 Broad Urban Superintendents Academy fellow.

Kathi began her career as a middle school English teacher and holds an Ed. D. in educational leadership for social justice from Loyola and a Master of Education from Marymount University. Current work at Greater Tacoma Community Foundation includes the Pierce County Connected: COVID-19 Emergency Response project, the Tacoma Whole Child Partnership and grant disbursement of state funds related to Census 2020 outreach. She loves exploring the Pacific Northwest outdoors with her two rescue pups.



MARCY BOULET

**COMMUNITIES OF FOCUS
COORDINATOR, TACOMA-PIERCE
COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Marcy coordinates geographic equity initiatives at Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department through Communities of Focus, a program dedicated to advancing community well-being by centering resident leadership and neighborhood partnerships. As a connector, collaborator, and facilitator, she works alongside partners to co-create solutions that strengthen communities and support coalitions across Pierce County.

With three decades of experience in public health, consulting, and nonprofit organizations, Marcy brings expertise in community engagement, systems change, and equity-centered practice. She serves on the board of Nourish Pierce County, and is a member of Leaders in Women's Health, the Pierce County Community Engagement Task Force, Marion Grange, RESULTS, the International Association for Public Participation, and P.E.O. Born and raised in Buckley, Marcy understands both the strengths and challenges of rural communities. As a first-generation college graduate, she values the privilege of education and the responsibility it carries to open doors for others. Marcy and her family enjoy sailing, backpacking, and spending time outdoors, where she finds both peace and inspiration for her community-building work.

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AIMEE KHUU
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TACOMA
COMMUNITY HOUSE AND THE
REACH CENTER

Aimee is the Executive Director of Tacoma Community House and The REACH Center, a cornerstone of our community dedicated to advancing equity, education, and opportunity throughout the South Sound region. She has more than 15 years of experience leading national and international nonprofit initiatives focused on community empowerment and social impact. Before joining Tacoma Community House, Aimee served as Executive Director of Global Program and Chief of Health Equity at Providence, where she led strategies to expand access to care and address systemic disparities around the world.

Throughout her career, Aimee has championed immigrant and refugee rights, health equity, and youth empowerment—building partnerships that drive lasting, inclusive change. Known for her collaborative leadership and unwavering commitment to social justice, she continues to inspire teams and transform systems so that every individual has the opportunity to thrive.



ANNIE FRISBIE
CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER,
UNITED WAY OF PIERCE COUNTY

Annie Frisbie is the Chief Development Officer at United Way of Pierce County (UWPC). Annie is a mission-driven leader whose work is rooted in equity, community, and the belief that every individual deserves stability and the chance to thrive. With over 16 years of experience spanning philanthropy, social services, the financial industry, and community impact, she brings a rare blend of strategic vision, heart-centered leadership, and results-driven fundraising.

Originally from Nairobi, Kenya, Annie's lived experience fuels her passion for creating pathways out of poverty for families who are working hard yet still struggling to make ends meet. Under her leadership, United Way has strengthened major gifts, expanded corporate partnerships, launched a dynamic women-centered giving circle, and built storytelling-driven campaigns that center dignity and hope.

Beyond her professional work, Annie is a storyteller, mentor, and advocate for women—especially Black, immigrant, and ALICE women who are navigating systems not built with them in mind.

Annie holds an MBA in Finance and Organizational Leadership from Maryville University in St. Louis. She is driven by faith, guided by purpose, and grounded in the belief that communities rise when people show up for one another.

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