



Presenter Biographies

Joseph Altshuler is cofounder of Could Be Architecture, a Chicago-based design practice, and an Assistant Professor of architecture in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His teaching, practice, and scholarship explore architecture's capacity to build lively audiences, initiate serious play, and amplify participation in civic life. Could Be Architecture's work spans multiple scales, including designs for urban placemaking, interiors, installations, scenographies, exhibits, furniture, costumes, and publications. Could Be Architecture's work has been exhibited at Art Basel | Miami Art week, the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Elmhurst Art Museum, and the Chicago Architecture Biennial.

www.couldbearchitecture.com

Instagram @couldbearchitecture

Katherine Darnstadt is the founder of Latent Design, a progressive architecture and urbanism firm leveraging civic innovation and social impact to design more equitable spaces and systems. Since founding her practice in 2010, Katherine and her firm have prototyped new urban design systems to advance urban agriculture, support small business through Boombbox, created spaces for youth makers, advanced building innovation through Blank Box, and created public space frameworks through Design Trust Chicago. She and the firm have been published, exhibited and featured widely, most notably at the International Venice Architecture Biennial, Architizer A+ Awards, Chicago Ideas Week, NPR, American Institute of Architects Young Architects Honor Award winner and Crain's Chicago 40 Under 40. She previously taught at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Northwestern University.

Stephen DeFalco has a diverse career in recreation and informal education having worked for the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago, and currently with the Forest Preserves of Cook County. While Stephen has worn many hats within FPCC, Stephen's work as South Zone Coordinator and now as Nature Center Director has allowed him to work intimately within the Calumet region for the past five years and truly enjoys connecting local residents and community organizations to their local green spaces. In his free time, Stephen enjoys trail running and hiking, playing board games, and exploring with his family including his dogs Scout and Willow. Stephen holds a BA in Communications from Northern Illinois University and a Certificate in Creative Placemaking from New England College and the National Consortium for Creative Placemaking. Stephen is also a Certified Interpretive Guide through The National Association for Interpretation.

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Kimie Gordon is the Founder/Director of Brown Faces Green Spaces – A non-profit organization promoting justice, diversity, equity and inclusion in the participation of outdoor recreation and sporting activities across NW Indiana greenspaces. She promotes environmental education and climate literacy among youth, seniors, and families of color in an effort to connect culture to nature by facilitating healing-centered outdoor experiences and providing relevant insight on environmental issues that disproportionately impact urban communities.

Christina Crawley Hearne (BSW) is the director of Valparaiso University’s Access and Accommodations Resource Center and the 2019 recipient of their Martin Luther King, Jr., award for her social justice advocacy on campus and in the community. Native of Gary, Indiana, Hearne serves the Welcome Project – a digital oral history collection and facilitation practice in Northwest Indiana – as a community scholar, connecting the project to residents in the region and presenting alongside the co-directors at conferences and workshops, most recently at the National Humanities Conference in New Orleans. She has a strong commitment and passion for efforts that make society more inclusive and believes strongly that oppression of any type is an injustice to all.

Ben Helphand has a more than 20 year career focusing on mechanisms for communities to have a direct hand in the creation and stewardship of the built environment. Helphand is the Executive Director of NeighborSpace, a nonprofit urban land trust dedicated to preserving and sustaining community managed open spaces in Chicago. NeighborSpace shoulders the responsibility of property ownership for a network of flower, vegetable and prairie gardens across the City, so that community groups can focus on gardening and community building. Helphand came to the organization in 2007 and has grown it from 52 to 125 protected community spaces. In that time he expanded the scope of the land trust to include emerging interest in urban agriculture and nature play. Helphand is also the co-founder and president of the Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail, an all-volunteer, community-based organization that since 2002 advocated for the conversion of the under-used Bloomingdale rail embankment. In 2019 Helphand was appointed to the Board of the Chicago Community Land Trust. Helphand has also served as a board member of the Active Transportation Alliance, the Mayor’s Pedestrian Advisory Committee, in 2012 was awarded a Chicago Community Trust Emerging Leader Fellowship, and was part of Next City’s 2018 Vanguard class. Originally from Oregon, Helphand came to Chicago to pursue a degree in the history of religion from the University of Chicago and then went on to Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism.

Dr. Rolando Herts is the director of The Delta Center and executive director of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area, a Congressionally designated partnership with the National Park Service. As a 2016 Executive Academy Fellow with the Delta Regional Authority’s Delta Leadership Institute, he was awarded an executive education certificate from the Authentic Leadership for the 21st Century Program at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. Dr. Herts is a university-community engagement scholar who is committed to stimulating diverse, equitable, and inclusive cultural heritage development activity in the Mississippi Delta and throughout the United States. His community engagement and partnership development expertise has strengthened university collaborations with the National Park Service, the Alliance of National Heritage Areas, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Humanities Alliance, Mississippi Delta Blues Festival Brazil, and various regional and community-based organizations. He serves on the Delta Regional Authority’s Delta Leadership Network Regional Advisory Council, the Alliance of National Heritage Areas governing board, and the Advisory Committee for the Center for the Center of Southern Culture at University of Mississippi. He also has served on the Mississippi Historical Society Board of Directors, the Mississippi Blues Commission (statutory member), and the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Services (gubernatorial appointment).

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Karen Klinger With a BS in Wildlife Biology and Natural Resources and an MS in Geographic Information Systems, Karen has spent her career using GIS to support the management and conservation of natural and cultural resources. In addition to developing a website to share pollinator resources and map pollinator assets in the Calumet region, she co-leads the Field Museum's [monarch community science project](#).

Felix 'Flex' Maldonado born and raised in East Chicago, Indiana Felix AKA "FLEX" is a classically trained artist with 35 years experience in mural painting and grati art with a BFA in Advertising from the American Academy of Art in Chicago. Felix is currently the owner of FLEX Creative LLC. in downtown Hammond, Indiana. His major drive comes from creating large-scale works- He strategically chooses subjects often reflecting political, historical or social situations. Using the spray can to execute his larger works, his choice in palette and unique strokes in action he creates vivid imagery which commands the viewer's attention. He considers this technique as "Post-Grati Modern Impressionism."

Nicole Martinez-LeGrand is a Northwest Indiana native, calling Indianapolis home for over twenty years. She has been at the Indiana Historical Society (est. 1830) since 2016, spearheading their Latino and Asian collecting initiatives [as a staff member] of the Library and Archives Division. She traveled throughout the State of Indiana from 2016-2019, collecting audio recorded oral histories and paper-based ephemera to fill the historical gap in the IHS archival collection. Interview excerpts and her research were presented in two exhibits; Be Heard: Latino Experiences in Indiana (2018) and Be Heard: Asian Experiences in Indiana (2019). Research of both centennial Hoosier communities will be released in two publications released in 2022, official publications of the Indiana Historical Society Press.

Bonnie McDonald aspires to shape preservation into a more relevant and just practice. As President and CEO of Landmarks Illinois (LI), Bonnie advances the vision, mission, and programs of Illinois' only statewide preservation nonprofit organization. Her transformative thinking about preservation has led LI to focus its work on people and their important connection to historic places. She's currently spearheading the organization's evolution at its 50-year anniversary to enhance its relevance and to create a national model for justice, equity, inclusion and diversity in preservation practice. Bonnie is a collaborative leader and together with her board, team and volunteers, they've nearly doubled LI's staff, opened its first regional office, passed vital state legislation, and played a visible role as thought leaders during her nine years as president. From 2018-2021, Bonnie served as board chair of the National Preservation Partners Network, the national nonprofit representing preservation organizations, and she is proud to have been awarded the James Marston Fitch Charitable Foundation Mid-Career Fellowship in 2020 to write a guidebook to relevancy in the preservation movement. Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot appointed Bonnie co-chair of the Chicago Monuments Project in 2020 to help lead a truth and racial reckoning process in the city around problematic artworks. Bonnie received a Bachelor's Degree in Art History (Summa Cum Laude) from the University of Minnesota and a Master's Degree in Historic Preservation Planning from Cornell University.

Lauren M. Pacheco is a Mexican-American born and raised on Chicago's southwest side. She is a civic practice artist and cultural worker with over fifteen years of arts administration, curation, and project management experience. Her background is grounded in social practice and public engagement with a personal mandate to responsibly and respectfully invest in targeted communities. Many of her projects are interested in space, people, and social impact. Today, Pacheco serves as a resource to policymakers and institutions in the public dialogue about issues that impact artists and creative enterprises. She is an associate faculty lecturer and the director of Arts Programming and Engagement at Indiana University Northwest in the School of the Arts.

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Allison Schuette (MFA Creative Nonfiction) is a writer interested in documenting lives through text, audio, and video in a variety of genres. An Associate Professor in the English Department at Valparaiso University, she also co-directs the Welcome Project <welcomeproject.valpo.edu>, an online, digital story collection used to foster conversations about community life and civic engagement. Their most recent initiative, Flight Paths, explores the history and unfolding of de-urbanization and the fracturing of neighborhoods, communities, and regions in post-industrial America through the specific example of Gary, Indiana. Schuette has received three National Endowment for the Humanities grants related to her work on the Welcome Project.

Mary Lu Seidel is the Director of Community Engagement for Preservation Chicago, working throughout the City of Chicago to save significant built and natural environments. Her current projects include leading a community-driven planning process in disinvested neighborhoods to identify what is important to the community and strategies to keep those places intact. Prior to joining Preservation Chicago, she served as the Chicago Field Director at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She has extensive community building experience over 30 years in the Chicago area market working in economically and ethnically diverse areas. Her work has focused on strategic planning, community engagement, community organizing, public policy, advocacy and community redevelopment. She is committed to planning and implementation done through a well-focused equity and diversity lens. Instagram: Personal: marylus203 Preservation Chicago: preservationchicago Twitter: Personal: @marylus203 PreservationChicago: @pres_chicago Personal Blog: medium.com/marylus203

Dr. Kathleen Tobin is Professor of History and Chair of the Department of History, Philosophy, Politics, and Economics at Purdue University Northwest. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and currently teaches U.S. social history, women's history, the Cold War, and research and writing. Her recent research addresses population issues and birth control history, and she recently published "People, Not Property: Population Issues and the Neutron Bomb," in Cold War History and a chapter entitled "Manning the Enemy: U.S. Perspectives on International Birth Rates during the Cold War," Gender, Sexuality, and the Cold War: A Global Perspective edited by Philip Muehlenbeck (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press). Her books include The American Religious Debate over Birth Control, 1907-1937 and Politics and Population Control, A Documentary History. She has been active in leadership positions with the Indiana Association of Historians and the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Calumet Heritage Partnership.

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Gloria Tuohy's career has spanned over 60 years of professional dance, teaching and artistic direction experience in England, Europe and the United States. She was trained in the prestigious French Cecchetti classical ballet syllabus in England; dancing at the Volska Ballet Company in London. Moved to America in 1973 and opened Imperial Dance Studio with 6 students in her basement in 1978; founded Indiana Ballet Theatre (IBT) as a 501c3 non-profit ballet and contemporary dance company in 1997 and Incorporated in 1998 merging the school of dance and the company later that year. She has designed and sewn costumes and choreographed nine full length original ballets that have been staged over 50 times during the 42 years the organization has existed, 20 years were at the Star Plaza Theatre. Many students have toured with her to countries in Europe and across the USA, taking classes, performing and competing. In 2012, they competed in the Grand Prix in Italy winning 1st place. Mrs. Tuohy has worked with the children in the Safe Harbor Program, Boys and Girls Clubs, Merrillville Parks Department, Healthy East Chicago, Chasing Dreams etc, teaching classes and establishing outreach programming. She is a 32 year Master of Dance member of Chicago National Association of Dance Masters, a Leaders as Hero's and ATHENA nominee; recipient of the CALA Award for Arts Professionals (2012); nominated for Influential Women of NWI and the Society of Innovators (2017) and written about in All Worth Their Salt by Jeff manes. Mrs. Tuohy lobbied the Lake County Commissioners and was donated the Lake County Sanatorium Nurses Home that is the last remaining of it's kind in America that has not been destroyed or renovated and placed it on the National Registry of Historic Places. The repurposed building will become a cultural Centre and will house many arts organizations as well as being a home for IBT. From 6 students in the basement to teaching over 9000 students and reaching 600,000 audience members, with schools in DeMotte, Merrillville and Valparaiso, a ballet company and so much more, Mrs. Tuohy says, "It was all from the dreams of the children."

Amanda Tuohy-Fuller is a Certified Dance Educator, Dance/Movement Therapist, Columbia College Alumnus, professional movement coach, and resident choreographer for Indiana Ballet Theatre. Amanda holds a master's degree in counseling from Valparaiso University, and an AR-DMT Dance/Movement Therapy and Counseling from Columbia College Chicago. She has worked therapeutically with youth and families throughout NW Indiana, through experiential therapy methodologies. She travelled and performed in the company's featured repertoire for over 20 years, after training at Chicago-based facilities Joseph Holmes Dance Company, Columbia College, Lou Conte, and Ruth Page. Amanda is an honors graduate of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dance and has instructed ISTD classes in elementary and professional prep divisions. She has added to the company's rich choreographic history including IBT cruise ship and international performance, and is currently found choreographing company roles and staging company performances for IBT. She is the founder of IBT's modern & contemporary programming, and focuses on refined training of pre-professional and professional dancers, as well as inspiring young dancers. She directs and produces the concerts Kaleidoscope, an annual contemporary showcase since 1999, and Standing Room Only. Before retirement from her professional career with artistic works in nearby Chicago and for Chicago-based dance festivals, she taught throughout the Chicagoland area including workshops at Northwestern University, guest teaching at the West Hawaiian Dance Theater (Big Island), choreography for musicals, and more recently, for the Valparaiso University dance ensemble. After the pandemic shut down, Amanda guided IBT's response to the pandemic, helped the academy and company immediately begin zoom classes and virtual communications, and when reunited, helped to provide safe performance opportunities for IBT students to safely dance together for the community once again. Amanda focuses on the student and community, supports technical proficiency, longevity and artistry in dance and believes in inspiring others to find their own authentic self through movement and performance. Currently, Amanda is found rehearsing the Sugar Plum Fairy, Snow Queen, and helping to prepare IBT's talented dancers for the Nutcracker.

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Curtis A. Whittaker, Sr. is the Senior Pastor of the Progressive Community Church of Gary (Indiana) and the President/Chief Executive Officer of Families Anchored in Total Harmony, Inc. (FAITH CDC). Rev. Curtis is a certified Commercial Farmer learning under the hand of Mr. Will Allen and Growing Power. Rev. Curtis holds a degree in Accounting from Indiana University, Bloomington and is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). He is the owner of the CPA firm of Whittaker & Company, PLLC. His primary activity at FAITH CDC is to provide leadership and oversight of the programs of FAITH CDC of which Faith Farms & Orchard (FF&O), a USDA certified urban farm, is one such program. FF&O's mission is to equip urban growers of all ages with the tools needed to become certified growers and to provide access to fresh and locally produced fruit, vegetables, eggs and raw honey to those within the food insecure areas of Gary.

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