



Two Dynamic, Young Policy and Business Experts to Highlight “Powering Inclusion” Series Oct. 9 and Nov. 13 in St. Paul

***Dr. Andre Perry of the Brookings Institution and Arlan Hamilton of Backstage Capital
Featured Speakers at Events to Highlight Successful and Innovative Inclusion Practice***

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Minneapolis September 24, 2018—**Dr. Andre Perry**, David Rubenstein Fellow at the Metropolitan Policy Program of the Brookings Institution, educator and writer, will kick off the Center for Economic Inclusion’s new “Powering Inclusion” speaker series. The speech, cross-sector reaction panel discussion, and reception will begin at 3 p.m. Oct. 9 at the Paikka Event Center, 550 Vandalia St., St. Paul.

Arlan Hamilton, founder and managing partner of Backstage Capital, which has invested more than \$5 million in 100 startups led by founders who are people of color, women, and/or LGBT, will speak on Nov. 13 at the Paikka Event Center. Her talk will also be followed by a panel discussion and reception.

The Center for Economic Inclusion, is a cross-sector organization committed to strengthening the region’s civic infrastructure to disrupt systems and influence market forces to catalyze shared prosperity within our region.

The premise is that the Minneapolis-St. Paul region has one of the strongest regional economies, yet that economy is being weakened because we continue to exclude people of color from that economic vitality and regional efforts to close the gaps have stalled despite growing awareness of them.

Most U.S. cities compete with one another to attract talent and corporations. In the Minneapolis-St. Paul region, we compete with ourselves by overlooking growth opportunities in our own front yard. Our region will only unlock its full potential when our economy works for everyone, but our values of equality haven’t yet resulted in racial and economic equity. We need a roadmap and fuel to guide our next steps.

DR. ANDRE PERRY will identify inclusive practices, policy levers, and proactive roles each sector (business, government and philanthropic) must play to ensure our region grows because of our diversity not in spite of it. Doing so will align our actions with our values and further position Minneapolis-St. Paul as a hub for talent, investment, and innovation.

His recent op-ed in *The New York Times*, “Who Gets Left Out of the Urban Tech Boom,” contrasts regions which invest in communities of color as assets vs. those which exclude them and the resulting impact on a region’s competitiveness, growth and vitality.

Perry has been a founding dean, a professor, an award-winning journalist and an education activist. He has served on the transition teams of Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards and New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu. He authors a column on education equity for the *Hechinger Report* and contributes to *The Root*, *Washington Post*, *The New Republic* as well as NPR, PBS/NewsHour and NBC. Full bio here: <https://www.centerforeconomicinclusion.org/event-speaker-dr-andre-perry-full-bio>

His talk is entitled “Achieving the Growth We Want by Engaging All of the Talent We Have.”

ARLAN HAMILTON built Backstage Capital from the ground up while experiencing homelessness. Backstage Capital is a venture capital fund established in 2015 and dedicated to minimizing disparities in tech by investing in high-potential founders who are people of color, women, and/or LGBT. In 2018 Backstage launched a \$36 million fund specifically for Black women and a 4-city Accelerator Fund which includes funding and support tailored to address systemic barriers that “underestimated” founders face. She’s been profiled in *Forbes*, *Fast Company*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and many other publications and platforms. Full bio here: <https://www.centerforeconomicinclusion.org/event-speaker-arlan-hamilton-full-bio>

“Less than 10% of all venture capital deals go to women, People of Color, and LGBT founders,” Hamilton has said. “Other venture capital firms see this as a pipeline problem. We see it as the biggest opportunity for investment.”

Black women are among the most educated groups in the U.S. and fastest growing segments of entrepreneurs, but are among the least likely to receive funding. Black women founders receive just .2% of all venture funding and less than 3% of venture capital dollars in 2018.

The misperception of risk involved in investing in Black women specifically and in businesses of color generally permeates across sectors from business to philanthropy to public sector programs, and is accompanied by lower expectations for outcomes, and a view of investments as charity.

Arlan Hamilton’s talk is entitled “Accelerating Regional Growth by Investing in Businesses of Color.”

“We’re excited to have speakers of such caliber as Dr. Perry and Arlan Hamilton to kick off our ‘Powering Inclusion’ series,” said Tawanna Black, Founder and CEO of the Center for Economic Inclusion. “From the Brookings Institution to Silicon Valley, they’re proving what’s possible when we center people of color in our strategies for growing the regional economy through investments in leadership, drivers of talent and innovation, and catalysts for growth.”

The series will feature reaction panels with local leaders who will discuss the challenges that leaders are wrestling with day to day, and offer data-driven, cross-sector, community-centric solutions, to close racial and economic gaps in income, employment, wealth, and more.

“Each of us – regardless of role, organization or sector – has a role to play in creating an economy that works for everyone. The Powering Inclusion events will promote local adoption of key practices to drive measurable progress towards our shared goal of racial and economic equity,” Black said.

For more information: www.poweringinclusion.org

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