The WNET Group presents  
CLOSE TO HOME: Town Halls on Housing Equality  
April 26-May 24, 2023  
thirteen.org/CloseToHome

BIOS/Week 1 of 5  
THE COST OF LIVING: A Town Hall About Housing and Economic Justice  
Wednesday, April 26 | 6:00-7:30 pm  

With Mark Crain, Alana Greer, Angie Liou, Barika X. Williams, and Mel Willie (Navajo). Moderated by Annetta Seecharran. Opening performance by Mahogany L. Browne.

PANELISTS

MARK CRAIN is the executive director at Dream of Detroit, an initiative combining community development and organizing to revitalize a neighborhood and build a thriving community on the Westside of Detroit. DREAM is providing affordable housing, developing an economic corridor, and organizing local residents with folks from throughout Detroit’s metro-area Muslim community in the fight for racial and economic justice in the city. Prior to DREAM, Mark worked in digital strategy and community organizing at Chicago’s Inner-City Muslim Action Network, Obama 2012, and most recently, MoveOn, where he built a $5M, 15-person department. Mark also has significant organizational development experience and currently serves on the boards of the Detroit Justice Center, ReThink Media, and Emgage Foundation. dreamofdetroit.org

ALANA GREER is the director and co-founder of Community Justice Project. As a movement lawyer, she supports community led campaigns for racial justice and human rights. Alana is passionate about lifting up the voices of the community members she works with and using her legal and analytic skills to support grassroots movements seeking to dismantle structural racism and inequality. She is an Echoing Green BMA Fellow and an advisory board member for the Dream Defenders, Law for Black Lives, and New Florida Majority. She was previously a staff attorney at Florida Legal Services and Advancement Project’s National Office, where she worked with youth and parent leaders across the nation fighting to end the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Originally from Miami, Alana left Florida to attend Boston College and Harvard Law School, where she was a student attorney at the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau, and returned home to support youth organizing that arose after the killing of Trayvon Martin. Prior to law school, she was a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and worked with the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area to defend individuals from the criminalization of homelessness. communityjusticeproject.com

ANGIE LIOU is executive director of the Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC). She is a seasoned community leader specializing in affordable housing and community development since 2004 and having served as the project lead on over $150 million worth of projects. Under her leadership, ACDC has expanded its programs in housing support, resident and youth engagement and leadership, community planning, and placekeeping. Previously serving as ACDC’s Director of Real Estate, Angie oversaw the asset management for ACDC’s portfolio of 300+ units and was responsible for developing a pipeline of new ACDC projects. She has worked in Seattle and Philadelphia as a consultant and project manager at nonprofits that provide safe and affordable housing. In 2022, Angie was selected to serve on HUD’s Housing Counseling Federal Advisory Committee representing the Real Estate industry. Angie earned her Master of City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania with a concentration in Community Development and her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. Angie lives with her spouse in Boston, MA. asiancdc.org
BARIKÁ X. WILLIAMS is the executive director of the Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development Inc. (ANHD), a leading non-for-profit focused on creating housing and economic justice for all New Yorkers. Ms. Williams previously served as the Assistant Secretary for Housing for the State of New York under the Governor where she managed the NY’s major housing priorities including the $20 billion housing plan and expanding tenant protections statewide. While with NYU’s Metropolitan Center for Urban Education and the Urban Institute in Washington, DC, she worked on innovative initiatives and published on topics including affordable housing practices, foreclosures, urban mobility, disaster recovery, and the links between health, education, and housing on neighborhoods. Ms. Williams is the 2020 recipient of APA-NY’s Robert W. Ponte Award for her commitment to a more just NYC build environment that understands systemic racism’s intersection to place and community. Barika serves on the US Treasury’s Advisory Committee on Racial Equity and on numerous Boards including the Capital One Community Advisory Board and on the Board of Directors of the Urban Design Forum. Barika received a Master’s in City Planning from the MIT and a BA from Washington University in St. Louis. anhd.org

MEL WILLIE (NAVOJO) is the director of native partnerships and strategy of NeighborWorks America. He leads NeighborWorks America’s Native work to expand its investment in tribal communities. He is a national leader in Indian Country with more than 23 years of experience in nonprofit management, government, political, public, and intergovernmental affairs and he has represented tribal interests at the local, tribal, state and national level. He is a member of the Navajo Nation, born and raised on the reservation in northeast Arizona. Before joining NeighborWorks, he served as principal of Chee Consulting, working with a range of clients to advance and strengthen tribal communities. Having served as past executive director of the National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) and as special advisor to one of the nation’s largest public housing authorities, he is intimately familiar with providing affordable housing through highly regulated federal programs. neighborworks.org

MODERATOR

ANNETTA SEECHARRAN has a 25-year track record of breaking down barriers and creating opportunities that rebalance power and access for those that have been locked out. She began her career as a youth organizer in the Bronx, where she grew up. She navigated her way through international development work early in her career, but was pulled back to New York City to serve her own community, for whom there were no culturally or linguistically accessible social service programs at the time. Annetta is currently the executive director of Chhaya Community Development Corporation, a housing and economic justice organization serving South Asian and Indo-Caribbean New Yorkers. Previously, she was the director for policy and advocacy at United Neighborhood Houses, and the executive director of South Asian Youth Action (SAYA), and the creator of YouthActionNet, now a leading global initiative promoting youth social entrepreneurship. A Guamanian immigrant, Annetta holds an M.A. in international political economy and development from Fordham University, a B.A. in political science from Manhattanville College. She served on the 2018 New York City Charter Revision Commission and currently serves as a New York City Civic Engagement Commissioner. Annetta is also a long serving board member of the New York Immigration Coalition. chhayacdc.org

OPENING PERFORMANCE

MAHOGANY L. BROWNE is a writer, playwright, organizer, and educator. The first-ever poet-in-residence at Lincoln Center, she was additionally selected as Kennedy Center’s Next 50, and Wesleyan’s 2022-23 Distinguished Writer-in-Residence. Browne is the executive director of JustMedia, and the artistic director of Urban Word NYC. She has received fellowships from All Arts, Arts for Justice, Air Serenbe, Baldwin for the Arts, Cave Canem, Poets House, Mellon Research, and the Rauschenberg Foundation. She is the author of recent works: Vinyl Moon, Chlorine Sky (optioned for Steppenwolf Theater), Woke: A Young Poets Call to Justice, Woke Baby, and Black Girl Magic. Browne is the founder of Woke Baby Book Fair, a diverse lit initiative. She is currently touring her latest poetry collection, Chrome Valley, which received a starred review from Publishers Weekly and was highlighted in the New York Times. She lives in Brooklyn, NY.