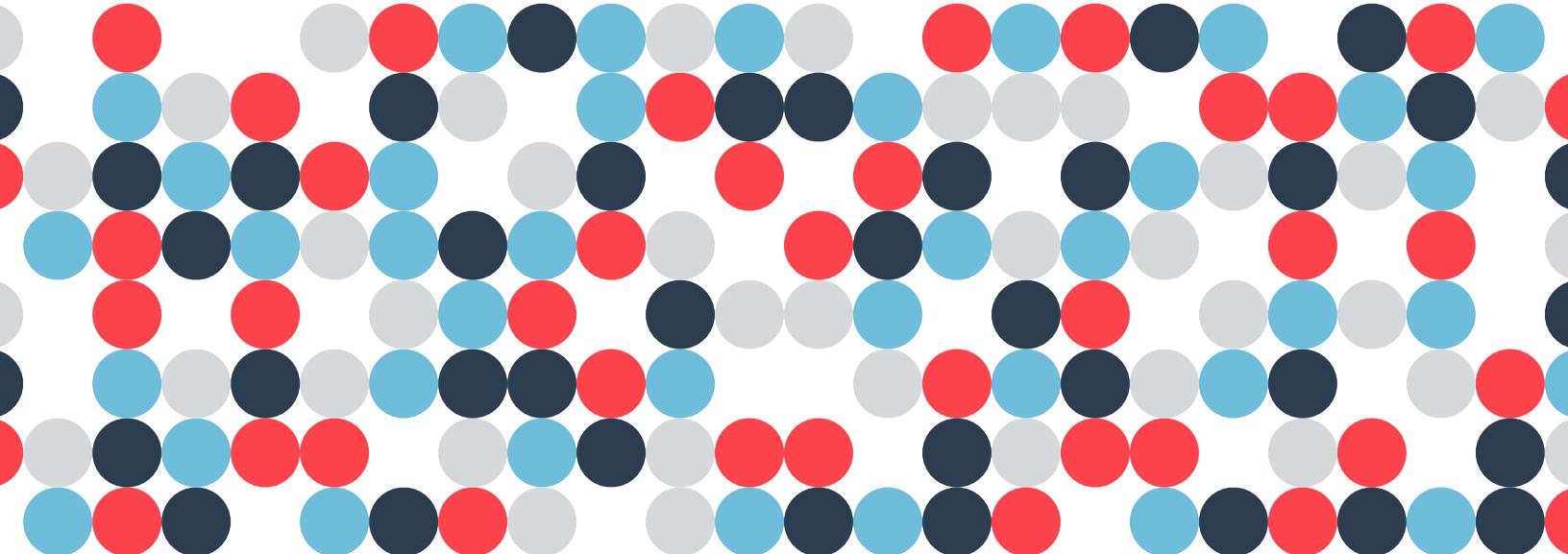




LEADERSHIP ● ● ● SEMINAR

January 30-31, 2026 | Washington, D.C.

Program Guide



Schedule

Friday, Jan. 30

9 a.m. – 5 p.m.	Registration M1 Foyer, Level M1
10 a.m. – Noon	Off-Site Experience (Optional) American Dream Experience MCAAD 1503 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington D.C. Attendees going to this event will be responsible for their own transportation to and from the American Dream Experience. Tickets are available at Registration.
1:30 – 2:45 p.m.	Keynote Presentation & Fireside Chat Leadership in Moments That Matter: Navigating Crisis, Transition, and Turbulent Times Tonia Wellons President & CEO – Greater Washington Community Foundation Univ of DC/Catholic Univ, Level M1
2:45 – 4 p.m.	Facilitated Leadership Workshop 1 Civic Leadership Through Conflict and Polarization Univ of DC/Catholic Univ, Level M1
4:15 – 5:30 p.m.	Facilitated Leadership Workshop 2 Understanding the Federal Landscape: How Policy Is Shaped, Made, and Implemented Univ of DC/Catholic Univ, Level M1

Schedule

Saturday, Jan. 31

7:30 a.m. – Noon	Registration M1 Foyer, Level M1
8:30 – 10:30 a.m.	Work-a-Like Networking Breakfast Independence Foyer, Level M4
10:45 – 12:15 p.m.	Facilitated Leadership Workshop 3 AI for Impact: A Strategic Roadmap for Association Leaders Independence Ballroom D-E, Level M4
12:15 – 1:15 p.m.	Networking Luncheon Independence Ballroom F-H, Level M4
1:30 – 3 p.m.	Work-A-Like Professional Development Session Sustainable Leadership: Creating Balance, Focus, and Organizational Clarity Independence Ballroom D-E, Level M4
3:15 – 4:15 p.m.	Closing Keynote Presentation Leading with Clarity: What It Takes to Move People and Institutions in Uncertain Times Tim Wise Author and Speaker on Perspective, Power, and Institutional Culture Independence Ballroom D-E, Level M4
4:30 – 5:30 p.m.	Leadership Reception Mezzanine Foyer, Level 2

Keynote Speaker



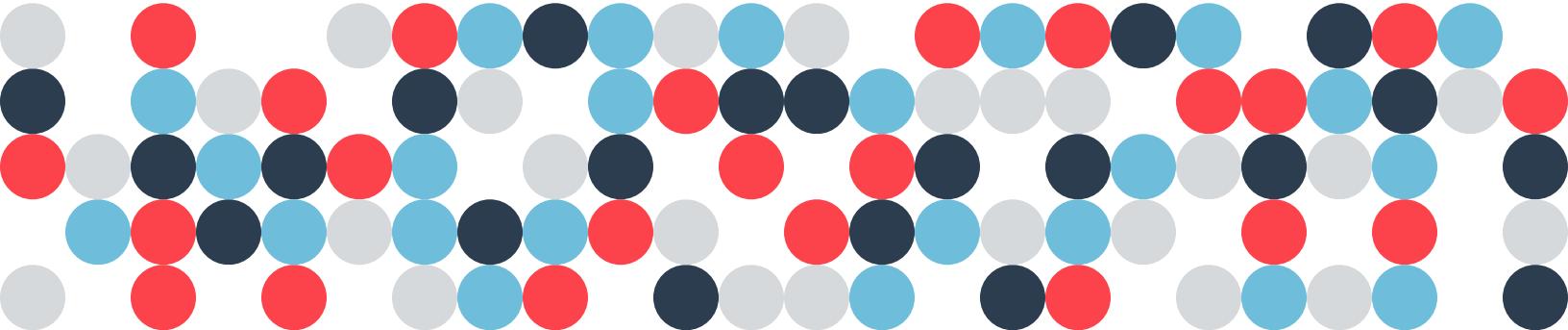
Tonia Wellons

President & CEO of the Greater Washington Community Foundation

Tonia Wellons is the President & CEO of the Greater Washington Community Foundation, the largest public foundation in the Greater Washington region. Under her leadership, The Community Foundation launched a bold 10-year strategic vision to help close the region's racial wealth gap by directing capital, strengthening civic and philanthropic infrastructure, and centering economic justice.

Tonia is a dynamic and values-driven leader known for her ability to navigate seamlessly between visionary leadership, strategy, and fundraising. Since her tenure as CEO, The Community Foundation has grown from \$331 million to \$500 million in assets under management. Tonia has deep relationships across both grassroots and grassstops communities and is a trusted convener and coalition builder. Her leadership reflects a combination of on-the-ground insight and high-level influence, enabling The Community Foundation to respond with both urgency and intention to the region's most pressing challenges and biggest opportunities. From instigating transformative initiatives like Guaranteed Basic Income pilots and Children's Savings Accounts to guiding major fundraising campaigns that expand the Foundation's impact, Tonia consistently brings vision, discipline, and heart to her work.

Accolades include Power 100 Washington 2025; *Washingtonian Magazine*'s "Hero of the Crisis," and *Washington Business Journal*'s 2020 Nonprofit Leader of the Year. Tonia is a graduate of North Carolina A&T, and a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.



Keynote Speaker



Tim Wise

Author and Speaker on Perspective, Power, and Institutional Culture

Tim Wise is one of the country's most compelling voices on culture, politics, and power, bringing three decades of experience to some of the most urgent issues of our time. A gifted storyteller and sharp strategist, he helps audiences understand how we got here, what's at stake, and how to move forward with clarity, courage, and purpose.

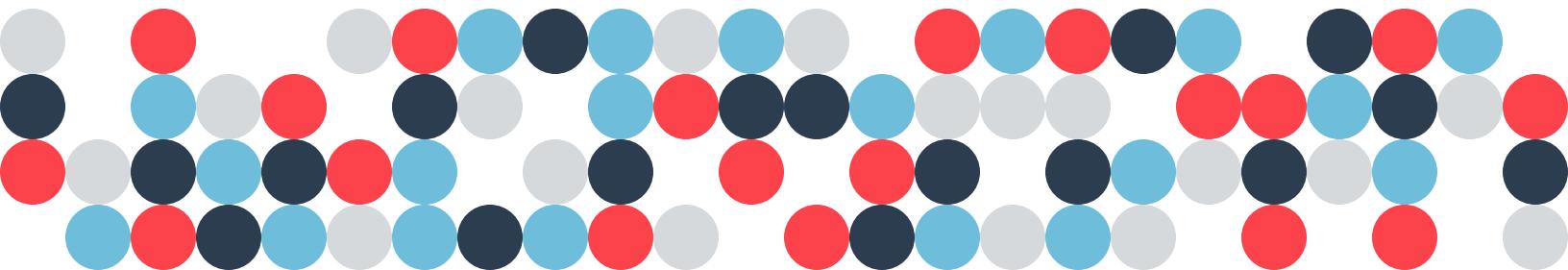
Wise has spoken at more than 1,700 college campuses and hundreds of conferences, nonprofits, and leadership summits, reaching audiences across education, business, law, public service, and media. His talks offer not only historical insight and sharp analysis, but also concrete strategies for shifting institutional culture and navigating today's polarized climate.

He is the author of nine books, including *Dispatches from the Race War*, *Under the Affluence*, *Dear White America*, and the acclaimed memoir *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*. His work has appeared in *Salon*, *The Root*, *HuffPost*, and numerous anthologies, and is widely used in classrooms and professional training programs.

Wise is a frequent commentator on CNN and MSNBC and has appeared in several documentaries, including *White Like Me*, *The Great White Hoax*, and *Vocabulary of Change* with Angela Davis. He began his career organizing against the political rise of white nationalism in Louisiana, later advising Fisk University's Race Relations Institute and training professionals across sectors.

He currently serves as a Senior Fellow at the African American Policy Forum, contributing to public education and strategic dialogue on racial justice and intersectionality.

Whether speaking to educators, students, civic leaders, or executives, Tim Wise offers a compelling voice for truth-telling, bridge-building, and institutional transformation in a time that demands nothing less.



Keynote, Facilitated Workshop, and Work-A-Like Professional Development Session Descriptions

Friday, Jan. 30

Leadership in Moments That Matter: Navigating Crisis, Transition, and Turbulent Times

1:30 – 2:45 p.m. | Univ of DC/Catholic Univ, Level M1

In moments of disruption, transition, and polarization, nonprofit leaders are called to lead with clarity, courage, and conviction. In this keynote and fireside chat, Tonia Wellons, President and CEO of the Greater Washington Community Foundation, reflects on her leadership journey, including stepping into the CEO role in March 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and guiding her organization through multiple crises, political shifts, and periods of uncertainty.

Drawing on real-world experience, Tonia will explore what it takes to lead during times of change, build and sustain trust with boards and partners, advance ambitious fundraising goals, and navigate the balance between being what it means to be nonpartisan but not neutral — leading with values, clarity, and a point of view rooted in equity and community well-being, even in a polarized environment. The session will conclude with a fireside chat with Verjeana McCotter-Jacobs, offering deeper insight into leadership, resilience, and staying anchored to mission when the stakes are high.

Speaker:

Tonia Wellons - President & CEO — Greater Washington Community Foundation

Civic Leadership Through Conflict and Polarization

2:45 – 4 p.m. | Univ of DC/Catholic Univ, Level M1

The need for civics has never been clearer. As a result, public support for civics is overwhelming; bipartisan momentum is growing in the states; and communities are hungry for something that brings us together rather than drives us apart. How will state school boards associations respond in this moment? This session will provide hyper-focused, advanced messaging to professional leaders seeking to support their members during this challenging political climate. It will address how associations can proactively drive their work forward and support their members in political climates. This session will also delve into the appropriate role of school boards in centering civic education, the benefits that school districts will enjoy when civic learning is elevated to the same foundational level as other core disciplines, and tangible ways in which school boards can reaffirm civic learning. The facilitator will provide resources for leaders to support members who wish to reaffirm their civic learning.

Presenter:

Mya Baker - Chief Learning Services Officer — iCivics

Understanding the Federal Landscape: How Policy Is Shaped, Made, and Implemented

4:15 – 5:30 p.m. | Univ of DC/Catholic Univ, Level M1

Federal education policymaking is unfolding amid significant political shifts, administrative restructuring, and competing visions for the future of public schooling. This session provides a comprehensive overview of how federal policy is shaped and made — from agenda-setting and legislative action to regulatory processes, agency rulemaking, and appropriations. Participants will gain insight into the dynamics that influence policy outcomes, including partisan priorities, inter-agency coordination, stakeholder advocacy, administrative authorities, and congressional oversight.

Through an examination of current federal developments, attendees will explore:

- How federal agencies, Congress, and the White House each drive (and constrain) policymaking.
- The growing role of administrative actions — such as executive orders, intra-agency agreements, and negotiated rulemaking — in shaping the education landscape.
- Key factors that influence policy trajectories, including political polarization, budgetary pressures, public opinion, and advocacy coalitions.
- The implications of federal policy for state and local governance, district operations, and school board decision-making.

By the end of the session, participants will have a clearer understanding of the federal ecosystem, the levers that shape policy outcomes, and how education leaders can proactively engage to influence federal decisions that impact students, educators, and communities. This session is designed to equip practitioners, policymakers, and advocates with the knowledge needed to navigate an increasingly complex and rapidly changing policy environment.

Presenter:

Dr. Phelton Moss - Managing Director, Government Relations — National School Boards Association

Keynote, Facilitated Workshop, and Work-A-Like Professional Development Session Descriptions

Saturday, Jan. 31

AI for Impact: A Strategic Roadmap for Association Leaders

10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. | Independence Ballroom D-E, Level M4

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping organizational operations, and nonprofit association leaders are facing a pivotal moment: determining how to harness AI strategically, responsibly, and in service of their mission. This workshop, led by the National Artificial Intelligence Academy (NAIA), is designed specifically for leadership teams from state school boards associations who want to move beyond the hype and build a clear, confident understanding of what AI means for their work, their members, and their long-term organizational strategy. The session frames AI not as a technical challenge but as a leadership opportunity. One that requires clarity, alignment, and thoughtful decision-making rather than deep technical expertise.

Through an engaging mix of discussion, reflection, and collaborative exploration, participants will examine how AI can strengthen their organizational capacity, support staff effectiveness, enhance member value, and position their association for the future. The workshop emphasizes practical, mission-driven leadership, helping teams identify where to begin, how to build readiness across their organization, and how to approach AI with both curiosity and responsible governance. Leaders will leave with shared understanding, direction, and renewed confidence in guiding their organization forward in the age of AI.

Presenters:

Ricky Gooch - CEO – National AI Academy (NAIA)

Colleen Sasser - VP AI Solutions – National AI Academy (NAIA)

Sustainable Leadership: Creating Balance, Focus, and Organizational Clarity

1:30 – 3 p.m. | Independence Ballroom D-E, Level M4

Leading an association demands balance in advancing a mission-driven agenda while managing complex operations, member expectations, and public pressures. This interactive workshop invites participants to step back, reflect, and intentionally design systems for sustainable leadership with others in the same positions. Participants will have open discussions on not only their roles within the organization, but share tips on how to sustain the work during difficult times.

Through guided reflection, team discussion, and structured planning time, this professional work-a-like session will bring together attendees of similar organizational roles to discuss and plan around sustainable leadership in state school board associations.

Participants will:

- Examine the root causes of leadership burnout in nonprofit and education association settings and discuss ideas to support retention.
- Discuss demands on others with the same 'title' and how individuals successfully balance all that is on their plates.
- Walk away with tips on how to best support staff and/or fellow board members in their roles.

Leading with Clarity: What It Takes to Move People and Institutions in Uncertain Times

3:15 – 4:15 p.m. | Independence Ballroom D-E, Level M4

Tim Wise explores what authentic leadership looks like in moments of conflict, fear, and political retreat. Through story and strategy, he offers tools for building trust, navigating backlash, and staying grounded in shared values while advancing institutional change.

Speaker:

Tim Wise - Author and Speaker on Perspective, Power, and Institutional Culture

Off-Site Experience (Optional)

American Dream Experience | MCAAD

At the American Dream Experience, you'll explore interactive exhibits that connect big ideas to everyday life: education, health, entrepreneurship, and financial empowerment. These are the tools that help you take ownership of your future. We're unapologetically optimistic about what's possible when you have access and opportunity. Come curious. Leave inspired.

Free tickets will be provided at registration. Participants will be responsible for their own transportation.

1503 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, D.C.