

US PLAY COALITION PRESENTS

# Play Date

TOUR '23



PRESERVING & PROMOTING THE  
**RIGHT TO PLAY**

**JULY 14\*PHILADELPHIA**  
SMITH MEMORIAL PLAYGROUND

# Schedule Overview

8:00-9:00am – Check-In with Coffee & Light Refreshments

9:00-9:45am – **Opening Keynote: “Democracy is Built in the Sandbox”** – Meghan Talarowski, Founder and Executive Director of Studio Ludo + US Play Coalition Steering Committee Chair

9:45-10:15am – PLAY Break & Snack Time

10:15-11:15am – Session One: **Why Play? – How Play Impacts Social, Emotional, Physical and Mental Health Throughout Life**

11:15-11:45am – PLAY Break & Snack Time

11:45-12:45pm – Session Two: **Who Gets to Play? How Race, Income and Class Impacts Access to Play and Quality of Play**

12:45-2:00pm – Lunch + Networking

2:00-3:00pm – Session Three: **Places to Play – Exploring Spatial Justice, Urban Design and Access to Play Spaces**

3:00-3:30pm – PLAY Break & Snack Time

3:30-4:30pm – Session Four: **Play as Solution – Examining Play as It Relates to Public Policy and Advocacy & Play as a Source for Community Health Solutions**

4:30-6:00pm – **Grab Your Permission Slip & Head Out to Recess! Time to DO the Serious WORK of PLAY!**

6:00-9:00pm    Optional: No-Host Happy Hour and Dinner (Yards Brewery)

## Session One

### Session One: **Why Play? – How Play Impacts Social, Emotional, Physical and Mental Health Throughout Life**

Deb Green, Executive Director, Parent Infant Center (Philadelphia)

Ivy Olesh, Vice President, Field Operations, Playworks (Philadelphia)

Peg Oliveira, PhD, Director, Gesell Program in Early Childhood, Yale Child Study Center, Yale School of Medicine, Yale University

Suzanne Flannery Quinn, PhD, Manager, KOMPAN Play Institute, Americas

Moderator: Danielle Scott, Founding Executive Director, Pincus Family Foundation (Philadelphia)

## Session Two

### Session Two: **Who Gets to Play? How Race, Income and Class Impacts Access to Play and Quality of Play**

Zero Jones, Director, Smith Urban Nature Preschool (Philadelphia)

Danielle Marshall, CDP, ACC, Founder of Culture Principals (Baltimore)

Tia Mathisen, Executive Director, Playworks Pennsylvania and co-founder of the Philly Children's Movement (Philadelphia)

Deb Shine Valentine, PhD, Life and Leadership Coach & Independent Historian of Play, Thriving 4 Equity (Baltimore)

Moderator: Harrison Pinckney, PhD, Assistant Professor, Penn State University

## Session Three

### Session Three: **Places to Play – Exploring Spatial Justice, Urban Design and Access to Play Spaces**

Jen De Melo, Vice President, Organizational Innovation and Strategic Partnerships, KABOOM!

Patrick Morgan, First Deputy Commissioner, Strategy and Engagement, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (Philadelphia)

Kira Strong, Executive Director, Rebuild (Philadelphia)

Reilly Bergin Wilson, Cofounder and Board Vice Chair, play:groundNYC (Philadelphia)

Moderator: Meghan Talarowski, PLA, ASLA, CPSI, Founder and Executive Director of Studio Ludo (Philadelphia)

## Session Four

### Session Four: **Play as Solution – Examining Play as It Relates to Public Policy and Advocacy & Play as a Source for Community Health Solutions**

Rebecca Fabiano, Founder and Executive Director, Fab Youth Philly (Philadelphia)

Alex Gilliam, Co-Founder and Director of Design + Learning, Tiny WPA (Philadelphia)

Daniel Hatcher, Senior Director of Strategic Partnerships, Alliance for a Healthier Generation (Washington, DC)

Harrison Pinckney, PhD, Assistant Professor, Penn State University

Moderator: Michael Nutter, Former Mayor of Philadelphia

## Meet the Experts



**Jen De Melo, Vice President, Organizational Innovation and Strategic Partnerships, Kaboom**

– Jen has committed her career to ensuring that every kid has equitable access to high-quality and safe play opportunities. In her current role, Jen works to provide responsive and innovative program solutions that meet the varying needs of kids and communities. Her expansive knowledge of play solutions and their benefits stems from leading hundreds of play infrastructure projects across North America, managing programs totaling over \$20 million in grant dollars, and creating new cutting-edge programs.



**Rebecca Fabiano, Founder and Executive Director, Fab Youth Philly (Philadelphia)**

– For nearly 25 years, Rebecca has worked in various capacities across nonprofit and youth-serving organizations, served on boards and helped to build solid youth programs that engage, encourage, and create spaces for positive development. As an executive leader, she has successfully raised funds and managed program budgets; hired and supervised staff; developed and sustained strong community partnerships and designed award-winning programming.



**Deb Green, Executive Director, Parent Infant Center (Philadelphia)**

– Deb is a seasoned early childhood professional with over 40 years in the field. For the past 10 years, Deb has served as the Executive Director of the Parent Infant Center (PIC), a nonprofit, NAEYC accredited and Keystone STARS 4 childcare and school age program. PIC serves 350 children in an urban neighborhood in West Philadelphia and has a focus on nature-based education. Deb has held several leadership positions in early childhood programs and has taught courses in Early Childhood Education at Community College of Philadelphia.

## Meet the Experts



**Alex Gilliam, Co-Founder and Director of Design + Learning, Tiny WPA (Philadelphia)**

– Alex is the co-founder of Tiny WPA, whose mission is to build better designed spaces and stronger, healthier, and more equitable places in Philadelphia by supporting citizen-led design improvements throughout the city as well as creating significant opportunities for residents to learn, earn, and lead in the design and making of their communities. Alex believes that great design, rich learning, citizen-driven innovation, play, and equity building are not mutually exclusive but deeply interconnected. He is redefining the way youth and adults participate as citizens and leaders in the design and building of their city and communities. He is widely recognized as an expert on participatory design, loose parts and adventure play, placemaking, design-oriented workforce development programs, and K-12 design education.



**Daniel Hatcher, Senior Director of Strategic Partnerships, Alliance for a Healthier Generation (Washington, DC)**

– During his time at Healthier Generation, Daniel has developed and led a national youth advisory board and helped create afterschool standards for healthy eating and physical activity. A nationally recognized workshop facilitator, he has spoken at education and youth development conferences in over 30 states and Canada. Previously, Daniel served as Director of Outreach at Youth Service America where he supported a youth advisory council and helped organize Global Youth Service Day. In 2022, Daniel was certified in Mental Health First Aid and became a certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide.

## Meet the Experts



**Zero Jones, Director, Smith Urban Nature Preschool (Philadelphia)** – Zero is incredibly excited to be the founding director of Smith Urban Nature (SUN) Preschool! With a deep commitment to liberatory practices, Zero has been dreaming of starting a school since their own childhood. They’ve been playing musically and artistically with kids of all ages for over a

decade. They also research, present, and consult on self-directed education, expressive arts, and place-based learning. Zero loves playing a variety of instruments, as well as embroidering, reading, and keeping pet slugs.



**Danielle Marshall, CDP, ACC, Founder of Culture Principals (Baltimore)** – Danielle is an inclusive leader focused on systemic change work that promotes equity and inclusion. She founded Culture Principles in response to a persistent need to operationalize Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion metrics, centering REDI goals and creating accountability systems. She

co-created and co-facilitates “Reimagining Racial Equity,” a learning intensive for business leaders to learn how to infuse the work of racial equity into their organizations and lives. Previously Danielle served as a non-profit leader in the play and youth development field for 20+ years. In fact, she is a past member (and forever advisor!) of the US Play Coalition Steering Committee. During her playtime, you can find Danielle traveling, knitting sweaters, and kayaking in all 50 states.

## Meet the Experts



**Tia Mathisen, Executive Director, Playworks Pennsylvania and co-founder of the Philly Children’s Movement (Philadelphia)** – Tia

is the new Executive Director of Playworks Pennsylvania and the co-founder of the Philly Children’s Movement. As a social-justice facilitator she is committed to educating families and youth on how to create a more just world

for black and brown people. A native of Birmingham, Alabama, and mom to three, Tia has lived in Philly for well over a decade and has planted intentional roots to call this city home. Tia was the executive director of the Mt. Airy Business Improvement District, the managing director for the Philadelphia Citizen and most recently the executive operations manager for B Lab Global. As a co-founder of the Philly’s Children’s Movement, she is a social justice advocate, and facilitator. She is an advocate of civic engagement as a vehicle to expand minds and improve society, and an optimistic believer in the common good. Her favorite childhood game was Duck, Duck Goose!



**Patrick Morgan, First Deputy Commissioner, Strategy & Engagement, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation** – In his current role, Patrick

provides leadership for Business Development, Special Events, Leadership Development & Training, Performance Management and more. He initiated the creation of a citywide civic

engagement strategy working with partners and community groups across public spaces. As part of this work,

Patrick helped lead a partnership with the William Penn Foundation to pilot a new national initiative in Philadelphia – Reimagining the Civic Commons – which has now been replicated in Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, and Akron.



## Meet the Experts



### **Michael Nutter, Former Mayor of Philadelphia –**

After serving almost 15 years in the Philadelphia City Council, Michael became the 98th Mayor of Philadelphia in 2008. He pledged to lower crime, improve educational attainment rates, and make Philadelphia the greenest city in America. Since leaving public service in 2016, he has remained active in public policy, government, and civic

life. In affiliation with the National League of Cities, Mayor Nutter and New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu launched Cities United, an initiative aimed at creating partnerships between cities, non-profits, and other stakeholders to combat violence and crime among African-American men and boys. He has also served on President Obama's My Brother's Keeper Advisory Council. Mayor Nutter has been a political commentator for CNN and PBS Newshour and is a Senior Fellow and national spokesperson for the What Works Cities program through Bloomberg Philanthropies.



### **Ivy Olesh, Vice President, Field Operations, Playworks (Philadelphia) –**

Ivy is passionate about public education and supporting school aged children through play. She is an experienced nonprofit executive with professional experience ranging from work with organizations in psychology and social science, to economic development, to health

and wellness and her passion is helping organizations and projects scale through efficiency, good strategic planning and strong team culture. Ivy is a proud parent and a civic leader, volunteering and serving on boards that focus on recreation, public space and play, public education and public art. She also served on the Board of Directors for Smith Memorial Playground and Playhouse.

## Meet the Experts



**Peg Oliveira, PhD, Director, Gesell Program in Early Childhood, Yale Child Study Center, Yale School of Medicine, Yale University** – Peg is an advocate for fair pay for early childhood educators, childcare assistance for working parents, and equitable access to high quality education for all children. Prior to her work with Gesell, Peg was a Senior Policy Fellow with

CT Voices for Children as well as a consultant to the Office of Early Childhood and other child advocacy organizations. Peg is a member the Board of Directors of the Becket Chimney Corners YMCA, and was the founding director of 108 Monkeys, a nonprofit yoga service organization.



**Harrison Pinckney, PhD, Assistant Professor, Penn State University** – Harrison is an educator who is committed to the protection of souls of Black youth. He works with communities to understand how the racial identities of Black youth are shaped and seeks to understand how recreation can be leveraged to positively impact this process. A member of the steering

committee, Harrison is a very active contributor to the Play Coalition, serving on our Play Research Team to provide expertise as needed and headlining our Play Conference and other partner events, most notably the groundbreaking 2018 keynote on the implications of race on play for youth of color.

## Meet the Experts



**Suzanne Flannery Quinn, PhD, Manager,  
KOMPAN Play Institute, Americas** – At KOMPAN,

Suzanne conducts research on active outdoor play on playgrounds. She was formerly a Senior Lecturer and Programme convener of the MA Early Childhood Studies at the University of Roehampton, London, Froebel College, where she was a research member of the Early Childhood Research Centre. Suzanne is involved in international research on a range of issues related to young children, their families, and pedagogues who work with children and families, with particular focus on active outdoor play on playgrounds. Suzanne has expertise in Froebelian pedagogic principles, particularly those related to play, materials, activities, and environments.



**Danielle Scott, Founding Executive Director,  
Pincus Family Foundation (Philadelphia)**

– Danielle is passionate and devoted to the Pincus Family Foundation’s mission of serving children and addressing their challenges in Philadelphia and abroad. She is also a longtime supporter of Smith Memorial Playground and Playhouse. Danielle has a career spanning over 35 years supporting employers in politics, real estate, corporate and business law, event planning, fundraising, and art. The past 25 years have been spent with the Pincus Family Foundation, 12 of those as the founding ED.

## Meet the Experts



**Kira Strong, Executive Director, City of Philadelphia's Rebuilding Community Infrastructure Initiative (Rebuild)** – Rebuild is an over \$500 million historic investment in improving parks, recreation centers and libraries across the City. The program focuses on physical improvements, promoting economic inclusion by ensuring diverse businesses have access to work on Rebuild sites, and engaging residents and stakeholders to help determine the future of their facilities. Before leading the program, she served as Rebuild's Deputy Director of Design and Construction. Kira previously served as the Vice President of Community and Economic Development for the People's Emergency Center, a non-profit community development corporation in Philadelphia.



**Meghan Talarowski, PLA, ASLA, CPSI, Founder and Executive Director of Studio Ludo (Philadelphia)** – Meghan believes that play environments in the United States can, and should, be better. She is a landscape architect and certified playground safety inspector with over 20 years in the design field. Her research is on the impact of design on play behavior and physical activity and has been presented at conferences worldwide. Her work has been featured by The New York Times, Popular Science, The Atlantic, NPR, Curbed, Landscape Architecture Magazine, and World Landscape Architecture Magazine.

## Meet the Experts



### **Deb Valentine, PhD, Life Coach/Consultant, Thriving 4 Equity (Baltimore)**

– Deb Shine Valentine is an expert on the history of play and play spaces in Philadelphia. Her research explores how race, class and gender shaped the play and place spaces that were created in the late 19th and early 20th centuries at the beginning of the Play and Recreation Movement.

A former early childhood teacher and administrator, now a life and leadership coach and author, Deb integrates play, movement, and critical inquiry into her work with individuals and organizations in service of the vision of a world in which work and play are integrated in all aspects of human life opening new creative possibilities for all individuals and communities to experience joy and delight in being alive, while doing their big work in the world.



### **Reilly Bergin Wilson, Co-Founder and Board Vice Chair, play:groundNYC (Philadelphia)**

– Reilly is a co-founder and the current Board Vice Chair of play:groundNYC, a non-profit organization dedicated to transforming the city through play. play:groundNYC’s playworkers’ run an adventure playground, The Yard on Governor’s Island, as well as repurposed-material

play programming in schools and public spaces throughout New York City. Reilly’s research on playgrounds and children’s mobilities has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the US-UK Fulbright Foundation, and the American Councils. Her research and play advocacy have been featured in national and local press, including The New York Times, The Atlantic, CBS News, Truthout, USA Today, and DISEGNO.

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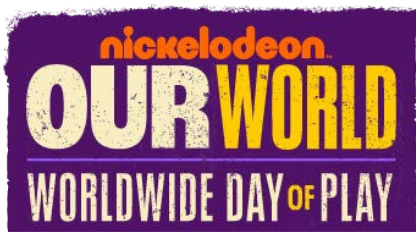


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