

## Karen J. Pittman

President and CEO

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Karen has made a career of starting organizations and initiatives that promote youth development – including the Forum for Youth Investment, which she co-founded with Merita Irby in 1998.

A sociologist and recognized leader in youth development, Karen started her career at the Urban Institute, conducting studies on social services for children and families. She later moved to the Children’s Defense Fund, launching its adolescent pregnancy prevention initiatives and helping to create its adolescent policy agenda. In 1990 she became a vice president at the Academy for Educational Development, where she founded and directed the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research and its spin-off, the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work.

In 1995 Karen joined the Clinton administration as director of the President’s Crime Prevention Council, where she worked with 13 cabinet secretaries to create a coordinated prevention agenda. From there she moved to the executive team of the International Youth Foundation (IYF), charged with helping the organization strengthen its program content and develop an evaluation strategy. In 1998 she and Rick Little, head of the foundation, took a leave of absence to work with ret. Gen. Colin Powell to create America’s Promise. Upon her return, she and Irby launched the Forum, which later became an entity separate from IYF.

Karen has written three books and dozens of articles on youth issues, including as a regular columnist in the youth development newspaper, *Youth Today*. She is also a respected public speaker and has served on numerous boards and panels, including those of the Kauffman Foundation, the Educational Testing Service, the National Commission on the Senior Year of High School, the National Center for Children in Poverty, JCPenney Afterschool Fund, National Collaboration for Youth, and the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation Board. She currently sits on the America’s Promise Board of Trustees and YouthBuild USA.

Karen has been honored with the National Commission for African American Education Augustus F. Hawkins Service Award (2002), the American Youth Policy Forum Decade of Service Award for Sustained Visionary Leadership in Advancing Youth Policy (2003) and the Healthy Teen Network Spirit of Service Award (2007), and in 2009 was recognized in *The NonProfit Times*’ Power & Influence Top 50.