Michael Brown
Co-Founder & CEO
City Year

Michael Brown is Co-Founder and CEO of City Year, a nonprofit organization built on the belief that young people can change the world. City Year is focused on addressing the nation’s high school dropout crisis. In 2009, Mr. Brown announced "In School & On Track: A National Challenge," City Year’s national initiative to significantly increase the urban high school graduation pipeline in America by calling on the nation’s idealistic young adults to help students in high poverty schools succeed.

Mr. Brown was named one of America’s Best Leaders by US News and World Report and an Executive of the Year by NonProfit Times for his leadership role in ServiceNation and the passage of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. For his work developing City Year, Michael Brown has been awarded several distinctions, including the Reebok Human Rights Award, the National Caring Award, the Samuel S. Beard Jefferson Award of the American Institute for Public Service, the Boston Bar Association’s Public Service Award, the Harvard Law School Association Award, and four honorary degrees.

Mr. Brown is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School, where he served as an editor of the Harvard Law Review. Prior to starting City Year, Mr. Brown served as a legislative assistant to then Congressman Leon Panetta and as a clerk for Federal Judge Stephen Breyer.

Aaron Williams
Director
Peace Corps

Aaron S. Williams was sworn in as the eighteenth Director of the Peace Corps on August 24, 2009. Nominated by President Barack Obama and confirmed by the U. S. Senate on August 7, 2009, Mr. Williams is the fourth director in the Peace Corps’ history to have served as a Peace Corps Volunteer.
Mr. Williams served as a Volunteer from 1967 to 1970, first in a training program for rural school teachers in the small town of Monte Plata, Dominican Republic, and extended his service for a third year to work as a professor of teaching methods at the Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra in Santiago. Upon completing his service, he became the coordinator of minority recruitment and project evaluation officer for the Peace Corps in his hometown of Chicago (1970–1971).

Mr. Williams has pursued a career in the development and implementation of worldwide assistance programs. Mr. Williams was a vice president for International Business Development with RTI International. He was a senior manager at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), where he attained the rank of Career Minister in the U.S. Senior Foreign Service. He also served as executive vice president of the International Youth Foundation.

As USAID Mission Director in South Africa, Mr. Williams led a billion dollar foreign assistance program during President Nelson Mandela's administration. In addition, he has extensive experience in the design and management of assistance programs in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. He was awarded the USAID Distinguished Career Service Award, and was twice awarded the Presidential Award for Distinguished Service.

He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and he was a member of the USAID Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid. He served on the Obama-Biden transition team, the advisory board of the Ron Brown Scholar Program, the board of directors of CARE, and the boards of the Institute for Sustainable Communities, the Pan American Development Foundation, and the National Peace Corps Association.

Mr. Williams is fluent in Spanish. He is a graduate of Chicago State University, and has an MBA from the University of Wisconsin. Mr. Williams met his wife Rosa during his service as a Volunteer in the Dominican Republic. The couple has two sons, Michael and Steven.

GARA LAMARCHE  
Former CEO and President  
Atlantic Philanthropies  
Senior Fellow  
NYU Wagner

Gara LaMarche is a Senior Fellow at New York University's Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service. From 2007 to 2011, he was President and Chief Executive Officer of the Atlantic Philanthropies, an international foundation that focuses on aging, children and youth, health, and human rights operating in Australia, Bermuda, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United States, and Viet Nam. During his tenure at Atlantic, the foundation made the largest grant ever made by a foundation for an advocacy campaign - over $25 million - to press for comprehensive health care reform in the U.S., embraced a social justice framework for grantmaking, and worked closely with new governments in many of its geographies to take advantage of opportunities to achieve changes in HIV/AIDS and nursing policies in South Africa, civic engagement and democratic reform in Ireland, a more secure peace in Northern Ireland, and many other areas.
Before joining Atlantic in April 2007, Mr. LaMarche served as Vice President and Director of U.S. Programs for the Open Society Institute (OSI), a foundation established by philanthropist George Soros. Mr. LaMarche joined OSI in 1996 to launch its U.S. Programs, which focus on challenges to social justice and democracy. During his tenure there, OSI (since renamed the Open Society Foundations) became the leading funder of criminal justice reform, launched and supported a number of fellowship programs in justice, law, medicine and community engagement, established an office critical in the revitalization of Baltimore, and helped create and foster a network of urban high school debate leagues.

Mr. LaMarche previously served as Associate Director of Human Rights Watch and Director of its Free Expression Project from 1990 to 1996. He helped build the organization's work in the United States and on lesbian and gay rights; conducted human rights investigations in Egypt, Cuba, Greece, and Hungary; and wrote reports on freedom of expression issues in the 1991 Gulf War, Miami’s Cuban exile community, and the United Kingdom. He was Director of the Freedom-to-Write Program of the PEN American Center from 1988 to 1990, when PEN played a leading role in campaigns to lift Iran’s fatwa against Salman Rushdie and challenged restrictions on arts funding in the United States.

He served in a variety of positions with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), with which he first became associated with in 1972 at age 18 as a member of its national Academic Freedom Committee. Mr. LaMarche was the Associate Director of the ACLU’s New York branch and the Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas. At the Texas ACLU, he led campaigns to provide adequate representation for death row inmates and oppose discriminatory treatment of persons with AIDS in the early days of the epidemic.

Mr. LaMarche is the author of numerous articles on human rights and social justice issues, which have appeared in the New York Times, Washington Post, Financial Times, Nation, American Prospect, Huffington Post, Texas Observer, and Wharton Magazine, and many other publications, and is the editor of "Speech and Equality: Do We Really Have to Choose?" (New York University Press, 1996). He teaches a course on philanthropy and public policy at NYU’s Wagner School and has been an adjunct professor at New School University and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. He also blogs at http://garala.typepad.com/ and many of his speeches and articles can be found there.

Mr. LaMarche has been recognized as a "Good Guy" by the Texas Women’s Political Caucus and as a Voice for Justice by the Fifth Avenue Committee. He has received the John Dewey Award for Distinguished Public Service from Bard College, the Hubert H. Humphrey Civil and Human Rights Award from the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the Progressive Leadership Award from USAAction, the President’s Award from the National Council of La Raza, the Champion Award from the Center for Community Change, and the Hope Award from Providence House. From 1988 to 1989, he was a Charles H. Revson Fellow on the Future of the City of New York. He has also served as a judge for the Sundance Documentary Fund, the PEN/Newman’s Own First Amendment Award, the ACLU’s Roger Baldwin Medal of Liberty, the Roosevelt Institute's Four Freedoms Award, and the Lodestar Foundation’s Collaboration Prize.

Mr. LaMarche serves on the boards of StoryCorps, ProPublica, and the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.

A Westerly, Rhode Island, native, Mr. LaMarche is a graduate of Columbia College at Columbia University in New York.