

Previous ATLAS Themes and Keynote Speakers

ATLAS Week Themes and Keynote Speakers, 2004-2017

2017 Atlas Week

Theme: "Visions for Global Change: Start Where You Are. Do What You Can."

Keynote: Alison Thompson, "Serving Humanity: Start Small, Dream Big, Act Now!"

Alison Thompson is a full-time global humanitarian volunteer. For the past seventeen years, she has run refugee camps, field hospitals, and resilience command centers in major disaster sites around the world, including Haiti, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Nepal, Greece, Turkey, and Macedonia. Her work started on September 11, 2001 when she volunteered as a first responder for nine months following the attacks in New York.

2016 Atlas Week

Theme: "Reaching Across Borders: Embracing Our Global Community"

Keynote: Kilian Kleinschmidt, "Turning the Tide: Protecting Human Rights and Restoring Dignity in Refugee Crises"

Kilian Kleinschmidt is a humanitarian aid worker and expert in refugee relief and emergency crisis management. For more than twenty years, he served as a Senior Official with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). He recently became known as the "Mayor of Za'atari" when he managed the Za'atari refugee camp in Northern Jordan from 2013-2014 on behalf of the UNHCR. Currently, he is serving as an advisor to the Austrian government on asylum seeker reception.

Distinguished Guest Lecture: Dr. Mukesh Kapila, "Don't Stand By: Lessons from Darfur for Today"

Dr. Mukesh Kapila is a medical doctor, humanitarian expert, and international aid diplomat. Currently, he is Professor of Global Health and Humanitarian Affairs at Manchester University. He has experience in over 130 countries serving in senior positions in the British Government, the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. His dealings with many dictators and despots across the world's premier trouble spots have led him to focus on the prevention of genocide and other most horrible crimes against humanity.

2015 Atlas Week

Theme: "Simple Steps: Global Change Starts with You"

Keynote: Derreck Kayongo, "From Homeless Refugee to Living the American Dream"

As a child, Derreck Kayongo and his family fled Uganda to Kenya to escape the Idi Amin regime. Ten years later, Kayongo moved to the United States. From there, he beat the odds, earned an education, became a U.S. citizen, and served in some of the world's most respected NGOs. In 2009, Kayongo and his wife Sarah started their own NGO, the Global Soap Project, which repurposes partially used soap from hotels into new soap for vulnerable populations. Kayongo has worked with the American Friends Services Committee, Amnesty International, and CARE International.

2014 Atlas Week

Theme: "Education: Igniting the Flames of Change"

Keynote: Shabana Basij-Rasikh, "Dare to Educate Afghan Girls"

Basij-Rasikh is co-founder and president of the School of Leadership, Afghanistan (SOLA), a nonprofit that helps exceptional young Afghan women access education worldwide and jobs back home. SOLA helps qualified candidates access good schools in the region and around the world. In 2011 and 2012, Basij-Rasikh was the National Gender Mainstreaming Advisor at the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in Kabul.

2013 Atlas Week

Theme: "Advocacy in a Globalized World: From the Classroom to the Frontline"

Keynote: John Prendergast, "Conflict Resources and Conflict Prevention: The Case of Congo, The World's Deadliest War"

Prendergast is a human rights activist and best-selling author who has worked for peace in Africa for more than 25 years. Under the Enough Project umbrella, Prendergast has helped create a number of initiatives and campaigns. With George Clooney, he helped launch the Satellite Sentinel Project, which aims to prevent conflict and human rights abuses through satellite imagery. With Tracy McGrady and other NBA stars, he co-founded the Darfur Dream Team Sister Schools Program to fund schools in Darfurian refugee camps and create partnerships with schools in the United States.

2012 Atlas Week

Theme: "Empowering Humanity Through Education and Service"

Keynote: Sheryl WuDunn

WuDunn, the first Asian American reporter to win a Pulitzer Prize, has been an executive and journalist at the New York Times and worked in finance at Goldman Sachs and Bankers Trust. She has also won other journalism prizes, including the George Polk Award and Overseas Press Club Awards. WuDunn was honored for Half the Sky in 2010 with the Beacon Award from the White House Project, a nonpartisan organization that seeks to advance women's leadership in all communities and sectors.

2011 Atlas Week

Theme: "Global Justice: Meeting Basic Human Needs"

Keynote: Irene Khan, "From Basic needs to Human Rights: A New Paradigm for Social Justice"

Taking the helm of Amnesty International in 2001 as the first woman, first Asian and the first Muslim to guide the world's largest human rights organization, Khan brought a new perspective to the organization. She has been at the helm of broadening its work in areas of economic, social and cultural rights, and initiating a process of internal reform and renewal to enable them to respond flexibly and rapidly to world events

2010 Atlas Week

Theme: "Global and Local Justice: The United Nations Millenium Development Goals"

Keynote: Hauwa Ibrahim, "Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women"

Ibrahim is a senior partner and the pro bono legal aid counsel in the General Law Practice of the Aries Law Firm in Abuja, Nigeria. One of the top defenders of women's rights in Nigeria, Ibrahim has successfully challenged numerous charges and convictions under strict Islamic Sharia law in her country. She has served as a consultant to the United Nations Development Program, the European Union and Lawyers without Borders.

Distinguished Guest Lecture: Raymond Joseph, "Live for Haiti"

Raymond Joseph has served as Haiti's Ambassador to the US from 2004-2010. Prior to that, he spent the majority of his career as a journalist. At 19, Joseph established the first print shop and founded the first monthly Christian newspaper (Reyon Limyè) in Cayes, Haiti. In the 1960s, he worked as a radio personality and founded Radio Vonvon, the first New York radio broadcast against the Duvalier dictatorship. During the 1970s and 1980s, he covered finance for the Wall Street Journal and co-founded the Haiti-Observateur, the first commercial Haitian weekly in English. He

was called to be Haiti's Chargé d'Affaires and Organization of American States representative in Washington in 1990, but after helping with the first democratic elections that year, he returned to the Haiti Observateur until his ambassadorship.

2009 Atlas Week

Theme: "Voices Around the Globe: Words of Inspiration, Hope, Change, Resistance, and Transformation"

Keynote: Emmanuel Jal, "From a Child of War to a Voice for Peace"

Once a child soldier on the front lines of combat in war-torn Sudan, Jal has been hailed as the "rising star of African hip-hop." At roughly 11 years old, Jal joined more than 400 other child soldiers in a courageous desertion of rebel lines. He was one of only 16 children to survive the journey. He is now a spokesman for Amnesty International and Oxfam, and has done work for Save the Children, UNICEF, World Food Programme, Christian Aid and other charities.

2008 Atlas Week

Jehan Sadat

Keynote: Madame Jehan Sadat

Political and human rights activist.

2007 Atlas Week

Shirin Ebadi

Keynote: Shirin Ebadi

2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Iranian lawyer and human rights activist.

2006 Atlas Week

Jody Williams

Keynote: Jody Williams

1997 Nobel Peace Prize winner; Founding Coordinator, International Campaign to Ban Land Mines.

2005 Atlas Week

Oscar Arias

Keynote: Oscar Arias

1987 Nobel Peace Prize winner; former president of Costa Rica.

2004 Atlas Week

F.W. de Klerk

Keynote: F.W. de Klerk

1993 Nobel Peace Prize co-recipient; former president of South Africa.