



KAREN PITTMAN

**Co-Founder, President and CEO,
the Forum for Youth Investment**

Karen Pittman has made a career starting organizations and initiatives that promote youth development. Currently, she is President and CEO of the Forum for Youth Investment, co-founded in 1998 with Merita Irby. Committed to increasing the quality and quantity of youth investment and youth involvement in the United States, the Forum supports organizations and communities that invest in young people by promoting a “big picture” approach to planning, research, advocacy and policy development among the broad range of national organizations that help communities invest in children, youth and families.

A sociologist and recognized leader in youth development, Karen started her career at the Urban Institute, conducting numerous studies on social services for children and families. Later, she worked six years at the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF), launching its adolescent pregnancy prevention initiatives and helping to create its adolescent policy agenda. In 1990, she left CDF to become 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 January 1995, Karen handed the Center’s reins to Richard Murphy, former Commissioner for Youth Services in New York City, in order to accept a position within the Clinton Administration as Director of the unfortunately short-lived President’s Crime Prevention Council, where she worked with 13 cabinet secretaries to create a coordinated prevention agenda. In the fall of 1995, Karen joined the executive team of the International Youth Foundation, charged with helping the organization strengthen its program content and develop an evaluation strategy. In 1998, she and Rick Little, head of IYF, took a six-month leave of absence to work with General Powell to create America’s Promise. In 1999, she returned to IYF to lay the seeds for what has become the Forum.

A widely published author, Karen has written three books and dozens of articles on youth issues and is a regularly featured columnist in the youth development newspaper, *Youth Today*. She is also a respected public speaker and has served on numerous boards and panels, including the Kauffman Foundation, the Educational Testing Service, the National Commission on the Senior Year of High School, the National Center for Children in Poverty, the Corporate Voices for Working Families National Advisory Council and the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation Board. Currently, she sits on the America’s Promise Board of Trustees, and the boards of JCPenney Afterschool Fund, the National Human Services Assembly, YouthBuild USA and Youth Smoking Prevention/PMUSA. Karen is also Chair of the National Collaboration for Youth Board. She is the 2002 recipient of the National Commission for African American Education Augustus F. Hawkins Service Award; the 2003 American Youth Policy Forum Decade of Service Award for Sustained Visionary Leadership in Advancing Youth Policy; 2007 recipient of the Healthy Teen Network Spirit of Service Award and was recognized in The 2009 NonProfit Times’ Power & Influence Top 50.