

Good evening, and welcome to The New School! My name is Ana Baptista, and I am a Co-Director of the Tishman Environment and Design Center and Chair of the Environmental Policy and Sustainability Management Program at the Milano School of International Affairs, Management, and Urban Policy.

Thank you all for joining us tonight for the Center's fourth annual Earth Day Celebration. This year we stand in solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico, and all communities recovering from natural and human-made climate justice disasters.

Since you've chosen to be at The New School tonight, you may already be aware that this will not be your average Earth Day celebration. The New School was founded as an act of resistance in 1919 by a small group of prominent American intellectuals and educators. Frustrated by the intellectual timidity of traditional colleges, they envisioned a new kind of academic institution where faculty and students would be free to address honestly and directly the problems facing societies in the 20th century. Today, the university's mission is to prepare students to understand,

contribute to, and succeed in a rapidly changing society, thus making the world a better and more just place.

The Tishman Environment and Design Center was founded in this same vein of inquiry and action. The Center fosters the integration of bold design, policy, and social justice approaches to environmental issues to advance just and sustainable outcomes in collaboration with communities. We are a center dedicated to collaborating with communities to address and solve real world problems by leveraging the unique talents of the infamously progressive designers, social scientists, and performing artists at The New School.

Tonight we are continuing the university's tradition by examining the history and entrenchment of inequality in Puerto Rico, and the movement for a just recovery in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. We are here to celebrate the strength of communities battling for environmental and climate justice, and to learn how to be allies in the movement.

It is my pleasure and my honor to introduce our featured speaker,

Elizabeth Yeampierre. Elizabeth is an internationally recognized Puerto Rican attorney of African ancestry and environmental/climate justice leader who is the executive director of UPROSE, Brooklyn's oldest Puerto Rican community-based organization. She is also the Co-Chair of a national alliance called Climate Justice Alliance. Her award-winning vision for an inter-generational, multi-cultural and community-led organization is the driving force behind UPROSE. She is a long-time advocate and trailblazer for community organizing around just, sustainable development, environmental justice and community-led climate adaptation and community resiliency in Sunset Park. In addition, she was recognized in 2015 by Vogue as a Climate Warrior and one of the 13 women on the frontline fighting against Climate Change. In 2014, Ms. Yeampierre was part of the leadership of the People's Climate March Mobilization – a march of over 400,000 people across New York City. She played a major role in ensuring the frontline was made up of young people of color, and successfully proposed the adoption of the Jemez principles for democratic organizing, which have since become the roadmap to building just relationships in the climate movement.

Following Elizabeth's remarks, she will be joined by **Michelle J. DePass** for a brief discussion. Michelle is the incoming president and chief executive officer of Meyer Memorial Trust. For the past five years, we have had the pleasure of working with Michelle in her role as Dean of the Milano School of International Affairs, Management and Urban Policy and Director of the Tishman Environment and Design Center, which she re-launched in 2015, reinvigorating The New School's commitment to sustainability rooted in social justice and community collaboration. Throughout her career, Michelle has been a champion of social, economic and environmental justice for people of color, women, indigenous peoples and low-income communities as she served a civil rights lawyer; a senate-confirmed, presidential appointee in the Obama Administration; a program officer at the Ford Foundation; and the founding Executive Director of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance.

Once again, I thank you all for joining us tonight, and now please help me welcome to the stage Elizabeth Yeampierre.