Keynote Speaker Bios

Joie Acosta, Ph.D.
Senior Behavioral Scientist
RAND Corporation

Joie Acosta, Ph.D. is a Senior Behavioral Scientist at RAND and a community and cultural psychologist. She specializes in community-based participatory research and evaluation of issues related to community health and resilience and the behavioral health consequences of disaster. She has led studies of community resilience post-Hurricane Sandy, worked with the Red Cross and local service providers to develop recommendations for involving them in resilience building. Dr. Acosta has been involved in supporting local communities’ resilience strategic planning in Washington DC, Los Angeles, and New Orleans. She has also been engaged substantively in the development of the National Health Security Strategy and its accompanying biennial implementation plan, as well as the Puerto Rico economic and disaster recovery plan. Most recently, her work has focused on examining the role that Age-Friendly initiatives can play in advancing disaster resilience among seniors and finding ways to improve the quality of health and mental health promotion programs.

Rodney Harrell, PhD
Director, Livability Thought Leadership
AARP Public Policy Institute

Dr. Rodney Harrell is a researcher, blogger, international speaker and solution creator for livable communities. He is currently Director of Livability Thought Leadership at AARP. In that position, he leads AARP Public Policy Institute’s Livable Communities work. His research on housing preferences, neighborhood choice and community livability are integral to the world-renowned Livability Index that measures the livability of every US neighborhood, and which he and his team created. He has also served as AARP’s housing expert for over a decade and leads the Future of Housing initiative.

He graduated summa cum laude from the honors program at Howard University; earned dual master’s degrees in public affairs and urban and regional planning from Princeton University; and received a PhD in urban planning from the University of Maryland, where he was a Wylie Fellow. He is a member of the Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi honor societies, and was named to the initial class of Top Influencers in Aging.