



Transformative Visions

# PRESIDENTIAL DISCUSSION SERIES



# NIAGARA UNIVERSITY

## Denis McDonough

### Politics, Climate Change, Foreign Policy

Tuesday, Oct. 13 • 7 p.m.



Denis McDonough is currently a senior advisor at the Markle Foundation, working to create a skills-based labor market that enables all Americans to succeed in the digital economy. His previous work at Markle involved leading the Rework America Task Force, a coalition of diverse, cross-sector leaders from business, education, government, and other organizations. McDonough also serves as senior advisor for Technology and Global Policy for Macro Advisory Partners, a strategic advisory firm which helps to navigate the intersection of global markets, geopolitics, and policy. In addition, he is an executive fellow at the University of Notre Dame's Keough School of Global Affairs, teaching a global policy seminar for graduate and undergraduate students. From February 2013 to January 2017, McDonough served as White House chief of staff for President Barack Obama. In that role, McDonough managed the White House staff, as well as cabinet secretaries and agency leaders.

He advised the President on domestic policy and national security challenges facing the country, management issues facing the federal government, and devised and enforced plans and accountability for performance and goals, maintaining the Obama Administration's reputation for effective, ethical operation. He planned and coordinated efforts to recruit and retain key talent – including an unprecedented expansion of technology experts and engineers within the White House and across the federal government. Prior to his role as chief of staff, from September 2010 until February 2013, McDonough was assistant to the President and principal deputy national security advisor. He chaired the National Security Council's Deputies Committee, leading a multiagency team to address complex national security challenges, including crisis management and national security policy making decisions. Throughout the 2008 Presidential campaign, McDonough served as senior foreign policy advisor for Obama for America. He has served in senior leadership and policy-making positions in the U.S. House of Representatives, as professional staff member on the International Relations Committee, and in the U.S. Senate, for the Senate Majority Leader and for Senator Ken Salazar (CO). He is on the board of directors for Catalyte, a Baltimore-based company that uses AI and data science to build technology workforces for the world's most progressive companies. He is a member of the National Democratic Institute board of directors and of the advisory council for the Tent Partnership for Refugees. He is also on the board of directors for the SAFE Project, a national nonprofit working to end the nation's catastrophic addiction epidemic. McDonough received his B.A., summa cum laude, from St. John's University (MN) and his M.S. from Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. He lives in Maryland with his wife and three children.

# **Dina Gilio-Whitaker**

## **Environmental Justice, Indigenous Resistance**

**Tuesday, Oct. 27 • 7 p.m.**



### **Career Focus:**

- "Indigenized" environmental justice
- In her research, she argues that modern environmentalists must look to the history of Indigenous resistance for wisdom and inspiration in our common fight for a just and sustainable future
- She will discuss the fraught history of treaty violations, struggles for food and water security, and protection of sacred sites, while highlighting the important leadership of Indigenous women in the centuries-long struggle involving environmental justice activism and policy

### **Biography:**

Dina Gilio-Whitaker (Colville Confederated Tribes) is the policy director and a senior research associate at the Center for World Indigenous Studies and teaches American Indian Studies at California State University San Marcos. She is the author of "As Long As Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock," and coauthor, with Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, of "All the Real Indians Died Off: and 20 Other Myths About Native Americans." She lives in San Clemente, California.

**[www.niagara.edu/speakerseries102720](http://www.niagara.edu/speakerseries102720)**

# Soffiyah Elijah

## Criminal Justice, Policing, and Prisons

Tuesday, Nov. 17 • 7 p.m.



### Career Focus:

- Support for families of incarcerated people
- Criminal justice reform, police reform
- Disrupting cycles of mass incarceration

### Biography:

Soffiyah Elijah is the executive director of Alliance of Families for Justice (AFJ). AFJ was established in New York in 2016 to support families of incarcerated people and people with criminal records, empower them as advocates, and mobilize them to marshal their voting power to achieve systemic change. Prior to founding AFJ, Ms. Elijah was the executive director of the Correctional Association of NY (CANY) where she was the first woman and the first person of color to lead the 170 year old organization. Ms. Elijah has dedicated her life to human rights and social justice, and is a frequent presenter at national and international forums on criminal justice policy and human rights issues. Prior to leading CANY, Ms. Elijah served as deputy director and clinical instructor at the Criminal Justice Institute at Harvard Law School. Before moving to Harvard, she was a member of the faculty and director and supervising attorney of the Defender Clinic at the City University of New York School of Law. Ms. Elijah has also worked as a supervising attorney at the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, a staff attorney at the Juvenile Rights Division of the Legal Aid Society, and in private practice.

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