

EMBRACING YOUR ROLE IN BUILDING A CLIMATE-READY FUTURE

PRESENTATION BY CAROLINE LEWIS AT SMART CITY EXPO MIAMI - BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The CLEO Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, non-partisan organization exclusively dedicated to climate crisis education and advocacy. Founded in 2010, it works with communities across Florida to build climate literacy and mobilize climate action for a just, resilient future.

I was born and raised in Port of Spain, Trinidad. And if you told me when I was a barefoot street urchin eating mangoes, guavas, and tamarind off the trees for breakfast, lunch, and dinner that I would be up here speaking about smart cities, I wouldn't believe you. I was supposed to be a doctor, but I resisted my parents and became a teacher. That decision allowed me to continue to be inspired by others and hone my skills in inspiring learners of all ages. I share my education story because I think each of us is an educator and because the best definition of education I ever heard came from William Butler Yeats. He was an Irish poet who said, "Education is not the filling of a pail; it is the lighting of a fire." I agree, and I want to be an arsonist. I want all of us to be arsonists...to light fires in the hearts and minds of others.

I reflect with pride on my journey as a teacher, a school principal, and now, a founder and senior advisor of the CLEO Institute, building climate leadership through innovative education and engagement strategies. Our goal is to wake up every sleeping giant who can influence change, building support for bold climate action. Our goal is to convince everyone of their own power to influence change.

I hope to remind everyone working on smart cities that a smart city is a climate-ready city. And that's what the CLEO Institute is all about championing. We want everybody to make climate a

front-and-center part of how they approach their jobs, lives, and roles in society. Some of you just started your journey in imagining smart cities; some of you are seasoned warriors; and, I suspect, many of you are somewhere in between. Regardless, everyone has something to contribute to planning for future cities.

I have been doing this climate work nonstop since 2010; it stuns me when some people say they are not worried because they live inland or on high ground and will not be affected. And we say be prepared because we're all coming. We're all going to move to safer places less threatened by the impacts of this climate crisis. We also point out that climate vulnerability extends beyond rising seas and coastal inundation and includes heat, health, food, and freshwater vulnerability; vast weather extremes; increasing threats of wildfires; and displacement of communities from or to your area.

Remember that we are not just designing smart cities in frighteningly vulnerable places like Miami and Fort Lauderdale but also for current and future places where all the climate refugees (which many of us will become) need to move to. So, as you design smart cities, we urge you to keep in mind that a climate justice lens helps you better plan for the entire population, minimizing risks by intentionally planning for those who lack access to resources. Think about hydration stations, cooling

centers, solar farms, community gardens, affordable housing, tree canopies, etc. When we work with frontline communities, we must adhere to procedural justice, which says, "Do nothing for us, without us." People want to be at the table to co-create the solutions with you. For our community outreach work, CLEO literally takes the table to communities, meeting people where they are and respecting their lived experiences. I assure you that this will serve you well in building smart cities. You will get actionable information and insights straight from the people, which we need more of.

Today, I urge you to see your journey as a smart city planner or contributor as

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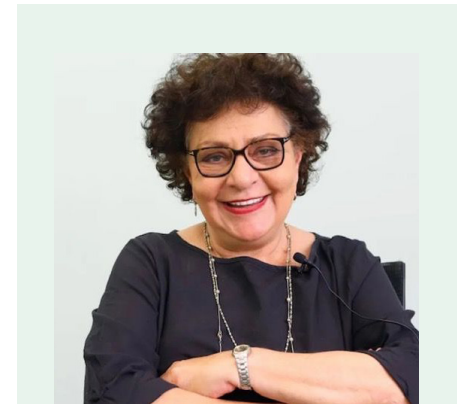


Caroline Lewis at Smart City Expo Miami

one that's accepting of the climate science that's so urgent and the climate justice issues that are so real. And if you aren't scared out of your mind, you're not paying attention to the data. They say crisis creates opportunity, and here is yours: Design thriving cities that address the wildly varying individual and collective needs of diverse populations.

Lastly, on behalf of the CLEO Institute, I ask you to rate yourself on two scales: your climate knowledge and climate engagement. The scales are from 1 to 10. 1: I know/do nothing; 10: I know/do everything. What's your climate knowledge score? Your climate engagement score? We want you to see these scales as journeys and work to intentionally move up the scale with respect to how much you know and do.

The next step is to take those two scales of knowledge and engagement and turn them into circles that help us prioritize what's important. We all have circles of concern and circles of influence. If your circles of concern do not include the climate crisis, it should. Once you embrace learning more, your need to influence change expands. With respect to the climate crisis, in 2010, I was studying and meeting with climate scientists, and my circle of concern became so huge that I had to do something about it. I was in climate grief. I still am. And every morning, I wake up and ask: Should I stay in bed and rock myself back to sleep? Or should I get up and fight another day, giving people hope that smart cities are being planned and we will be okay? I choose to believe in you.



Caroline Lewis
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Caroline Lewis wants the world to wake up to the climate crisis. Like the Irish author William Butler Yeats, Lewis believes that education is less about "filling pails" and more about lighting fires in people. Lewis founded the CLEO Institute in 2010 to educate, engage, and mobilize the masses in support of climate action. Recognizing the urgency of the climate data and the disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities, she designed CLEO's programs to build climate literacy and informed advocacy, top-down and bottom-up, simultaneously. Ultimately, the goal is to spur economic and political engines to grasp the seriousness of the issue and to act with urgency.

So, when my circle of concern about climate became too big for my head and heart to handle, I grew my circle of influence. I founded the CLEO Institute, whose work is broad and deep, addressing climate literacy, climate justice, and climate action and growing a youth movement. I encourage you to visit our website, CLEOInstitute.org, and join the CLEO community.

In closing, I ask each of you to work on your circles of concern, study the science, and know what good people are doing and what ideas are out there. Then, I want you to take that concern and understanding of what needs to be done and do it. Grow your circle of influence. I know you can. I believe you must. You have more power than you realize.