

## **BRENDA COLEY/ BIO**

Co-Executive Director Milwaukee Water Commons

Brenda Coley is the Co-Executive Director of Milwaukee Water Commons.

Brenda Coley is a Wisconsin based community activist. Coley has worked in the Milwaukee area specializing in: project management, health promotion, cultural competence and equity issues, and Intimate Partner Violence. She has worked as a non-profit director, and as a community consultant both in Milwaukee and on national projects. Her clients have included the Salvation Army, National Institute on Mental Health, Medical College of Wisconsin, and Women of Color Network and the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility.

Coley has extensive experience in Community engagement both on a community level as well as in public policy forums. Her work has ranges from instructing cohorts of Community Health Workers on strategies targeting specific populations, assisting service providers in increasing their cultural competence to work with marginalized populations, academic faculty on recruitment and retention of students from diverse backgrounds, and with UWM Cultures and Communities to mainstream diversity issues across the university curriculum.

She has served on several community boards, and public health initiatives including the Wisconsin Minority Health Leadership Council, Wisconsin 2020 (Wisconsin State Public Health Plan) Wisconsin HIV Prevention Council and the Milwaukee Reproductive Justice Collective Board of Directors.

Coley has received several awards for her efforts in social justice movements in Milwaukee. They include the 2006 Equality Award from the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center, the 2013 Women's Empowerment Award by the YWCA of Southeastern Wisconsin and most recently the 2016 Reviving the Dream; Bayard Rustin Award from Diverse & Resilient.

Coley's philosophy on community engagement is to bring to the pertinent issue a commitment to exploring the influences of one's own culture or cultures, an understanding of ways in which groups of people have been and are treated in society, and with that knowledge develop strategies to effectively engage diverse groups of people in important community issues

Coley is currently the Co-Executive Director of Milwaukee Water Commons. Milwaukee Water Commons seeks to create a community defined vision for Milwaukee as a model water city.