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Philanthropy & Nonprofits

40 Under 40: Gerren Price

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Gerren Price is the acting CEO for the Downtown D.C. Business Improvement District.
TIFFANIE DRAYTON

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Gerren Price
Person

Gerren Glenn Price, acting president and CEO, DowntownDC Business Improvement District

Gerren Price, a board member for Arts for Learning and Sisters Circle, among others, had been working in the nonprofit and local government sector for more than a decade when he joined the District's largest BID, at 138 blocks, 520 properties and \$15.6 million in revenue last year. He took over as acting president when Neil Albert stepped down in March and, during the pandemic alone, had stood up a food services operation that provided 250 meals daily to the unhoused, led the distribution of personal protective equipment to 1,500 businesses and patio heaters to 181 restaurants, and won a \$1 million D.C. grant to reactivate downtown streets in a more pedestrian-friendly way.

1. How would you describe your work to someone you met at a cocktail party?

I am in the business of economic development. I lead a team in planning, creating and maintaining clean, safe and welcoming public spaces for all who work, live, visit, gather and celebrate in downtown Washington, D.C. This includes doing the necessary, but not-so-pretty, work of servicing nearly 3,000 trash/recycling cans each day, ensuring our streets are free of litter, removing graffiti, clearing snow from walkways and bike lanes and fixing defects. It also involves stage setting work to ensure all community voices are a part of critical planning efforts and holding safe spaces for people to share and debate opinions. It also involves lots of behind-the-scenes work to track and report on economic data, market and promote our local businesses and cultural institutions and curating events, activations, and public art to amplify the vibrancy and beauty of our community.

2. **Most pivotal moment in your career so far:** Stepping into my current role as president and CEO. Like many American downtowns, D.C. was hit hard by the pandemic. Though we face many challenges on the road to full recovery, there are signs of forward progress, but also so many opportunities to reimagine what is possible in downtown. I feel incredibly fortunate to be in this role at this critical time.
3. **Morning person or night owl?** I find myself having to be both at times! However, I do my best work as a night owl.
4. **The most pressing issue you think your generation is facing:** My generation has faced a myriad of pressing issues throughout our lifetimes, but I think the two that are most pressing today are climate change and poverty. We need immediate action and bold policy to ensure that our environment is protected and preserved for the next generation. We also need to address the affordable housing crisis and envision public education to ensure that more people have access to opportunities to participate fully in society.
5. **One thing you hope to accomplish before the end of this year:** The pandemic made it difficult for my large extended family to gather together safely. Before this year is over, and as conditions continue to improve, I want to get my family together for a family-reunion style outing.
6. **What recharges your mental energy?** I love to go bike riding on one of the city's trails. I find my rides to be a time to pray, relax and just enjoy my surroundings. I always finish my rides feeling like a new man.
7. **Vacation spot you hope to visit this year:** I haven't traveled internationally since the pandemic and would love to get my wife and kids to Jamaica to enjoy the beach and visit some of our family there we haven't seen in a while.
8. **Someone you want to trade places with for a day:** This is an easy choice for me. I am trading places with Jay-Z. He's my favorite rapper, and he's married to my favorite singer.
9. **Your favorite children's book:** One of my favorites growing up was Shel Silverstein's timeless collection of poems, "Where the Sidewalk Ends." I love that every poem is so different – some are thought-provoking and inspiring, while some are hilariously funny. My daughters now ask me to read from it before bedtime, and some of the same poems I loved as a child seem to intrigue and amuse them just the same.
10. **What type of BuzzFeed quiz could you see yourself getting sucked into?** I avoid BuzzFeed quizzes at all costs these days, but I used to love all the ones that dealt with early '90s childhood references and would pride myself on getting most of the answers right.
11. **Emoji you're most likely to overuse while texting:** There's a couple I am guilty of overusing. I frequently use the OK emoji mainly because I am a brother of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., and it most closely resembles our hand sign. I also very often use the one with the man putting his hand over his face and the two really large eyes.

Close up

- **Age:** 37
- **Residence:** Fort Lincoln
- **Education:** Bachelor's in urban studies, University of Pennsylvania; MBA, master's in project management, University of Maryland University College
- **Family:** Wife Sheree Price; children Gabriella, 5, and Stella, 4; two dogs Ochi and Sasha
- **Hometown:** D.C.
- **First job:** Summer camp counselor