

Learning Network Virtual Forum 2021 Program Package

Looking Within: Anti-Black Racism and the Gender-Based Violence Sector in Canada

Monday, January 18, 1-3 p.m. ET
Tuesday, January 19, 1-3 p.m. ET
Wednesday, January 20, 1-3 p.m. ET

Welcome to the Learning Network Virtual Forum 2021, *Looking Within: Anti-Black Racism and the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Sector in Canada*. This Forum brings together the voices and insights of Black activists, advocates, academics, artists, and service providers from across Canada for a series of dialogues about complicity and accountability in the GBV sector on issues of anti-Black racism.

Through a series of virtual discussions, participants will be invited to “look within” the systems, organizational practices, and ideologies they take part in. Each session explores various dimensions of anti-Black racism, with discussions aimed at informing transformative, strengths-based, practical changes within the GBV sector.

A certificate of participation will be available to attendees for each session following completion of an evaluation survey through a link provided at the end of the discussion. Evaluation surveys cannot be linked to the individuals completing them.

Our hope for these sessions is to:

- Critically examine anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism and GBV in Canada.
- Amplify the knowledges of Black leaders, advocates, and survivors in developing anti-racist practices and policies.
- Identify strengths-based approaches for GBV organizations and service providers to be more accountable to Black women and children and gender-diverse folks.

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Connect on Social Media

Connect with us on social media throughout the event! You can tag us on Twitter or Facebook:

Facebook: [TheLearningNetwork](#)

Twitter: [@learntoendabuse](#)

Zoom Support

Once you have registered for a Forum session, an email from Zoom is automatically sent to you with instructions on how to access the session. The email contains a unique link that should not be shared with others. Please use the link included in the email to join the session. If you can't find the email, [please re-register for the session](#) or check your junk mail folder in case the email was filtered as a spam message.

Please note:

- All participants are muted during the live sessions. Cameras will be turned off for all participants except for presenters, event hosts, and ASL interpreters.
- If you have a question for session presenters, please type into the Q&A box at the bottom of your Zoom application.
- There will be an evaluation link in the chat box at the end of the webinar, please fill out the form as your feedback will guide future forums and knowledge exchanges. A certificate of participation will be generated once you complete this evaluation.
- If you are experiencing issues with Zoom (e.g. audio not working), please let us know by typing into the chat box.

Code of Conduct

The Learning Network is dedicated to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive virtual Forum. This Code of Conduct applies to Forum organizers, speakers, and participants within the Forum sessions, in addition to communications pertaining to the Forum (e.g. on social media).

There is no place at this Forum for harassment or intimidation based on race, religion, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, appearance, or other group status. Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- Deliberate misgendering or use of dead names
- Use of slurs and other dehumanizing language
- Doxxing (posting or threatening to post personally identifying information like addresses and phone numbers)
- Discriminatory "jokes" and language
- Intentionally disruptive behaviours (e.g. interrupting speakers, spamming, trolling)
- Sexually objectifying or harassing comments
- Bullying
- Threats or acts of violence

The Learning Network reserves the right to remove anyone who engages in harassing behaviour from the Forum. If you notice this behaviour, please report it by either sending a

Zoom chat to the panelists or by emailing vawln@uwo.ca.

Audio and visual recordings of the Forum are not allowed. The Learning Network will release a recording at a later date.

Accessibility

The Learning Network Virtual Forum recognizes that participants have different accessibility needs. Live ASL interpretation will be provided in each session. Any presentation slides presenters choose to use will be provided by email the morning of the session. Recordings of the sessions will be posted on the website several days following the event and will contain closed captioning.

If you have any specific questions and suggestions, please contact vawln@uwo.ca.

Safety and Supports

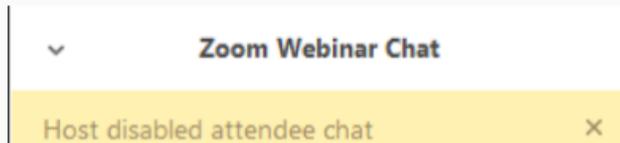
The content of these sessions is focused on anti-Black racism in the gender-based violence sector. We want you to take care of yourself as some of this content may be difficult. If you need a break and would like to debrief during the live sessions, a support person will be available to chat privately (i.e. written communication through a private chat) on Zoom. The support person's name will be identified at the beginning of the session and they will have (Support Person) next to their Zoom name throughout the session.

No one will be able to see the private messages between a participant and the support person, or between two participants. Such private messages will also not be recorded following the live session and will not appear on the recording once posted on the Learning Network website. Please see below for steps on how to send a private message to the support person or another participant.

As an attendee in the webinar, you can chat with other attendees, panelists (including the host), depending on what chat permissions the webinar host has allowed. [Read about all attendee controls.](#)

1. In your controls at the bottom window  .
2. When you click on chat, the chat window will appear. It will be on the right if you are not in full screen. If you are in full screen, it will appear in a window that you can move around your screen.
3. Type your message and press **Enter** to send it.

- You can also select who you would like to send the message to by clicking on the drop down next to **To**. *Please make sure you are sending your message to the right person (e.g. support person) and not to the main chat room, before you hit 'Send'.*
- When you receive a chat message, you will receive a notification at the bottom of your screen if you do not currently have the chat window open.
- If the host has disabled Attendee chat, you will still be able to view messages sent by the host and other panelists.



If you need additional supports, please reach out:

Assaulted Women's Helpline (24/7)

With assistance in English and up to 154 other languages

1-866-863-0511
TTY: 1-866-863-7868
www.awhl.org

Femaide for Francophone Services (24/7)

1-877-femaide (336-2433)
TTY: 1-866-860-7082
www.femaide.ca

Good2Talk line for post-secondary students (24/7)

1-866-925-5454
www.good2talk.ca

Kids Help Phone (24/7)

1-800-668-6868
[Chat](#)
kidshelpphone.ca

Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line (Friday to Sunday from 4:00pm to 9:30pm EST)

1-800-268-9688
Text: 647-694-4275
[Chat with Peer Support Volunteer](#)
youthline.ca

Nisa Helpline -(Monday to Friday 10:00am to 10:00pm EST)

Nisa Helpline is a peer-to-peer counselling helpline available to Muslim women of all ages

1-888-315-NISA (6472)
nisahelpline.com

Shelter Safe (24/7)

Online map that will let you know where the closest shelter is in your community
sheltersafe.ca

Support Service for Male Survivors of Sexual Assault (24/7)

1-888-887-0015
www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/ovss/male_support_services

Talk4Healing (24/7)

Services offered in Ojibway, Oji-Cree and Cree

1-855-554-HEAL
[Chat](#)
talk4healing.com

Trans Lifeline (Any day from 10:00 am – 4:00 am EST)

Hotline staffed by transgender people for transgender people.

1-877-330-6366
www.translifeline.org

Session Descriptions

Forum Opening and Closing Ceremony

Myrna Kicknosway

Myrna Kicknosway comes from Walpole Island, Bkejwanong Territory. She has been invited to the University of Western Ontario to assist students and staff in the area of cultural awareness, consultation, and counseling. Her life journey and personal healing has provided her with an ever-expanding appreciation of the knowledge of Indigenous Cultures, traditions, and our growth as human beings and unique members of our kind Creator's family.



Now What? Beyond Statements of Solidarity **Monday, Jan. 18, 1-3 p.m. ET**

Presenters: Dr. Rachel Zellars and Hirut Melaku

Moderator: Nneka MacGregor

In this session, participants will learn about how white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and state violence have come to shape both gender-based violence and the gender-based violence sector in Canada. Join us as panelists discuss why violence against Black women and children must be understood within this broader context, and how this awareness is essential for informing accountability within the gender-based violence sector.

Rachel Zellars, JD, PhD is a lawyer and professor at Saint Mary's University in the Department of Social Justice and Community Studies. Her research focuses on the history of slavery in the Maritimes and the lives of Black enslaved women. As a community organizer, she is a lifelong student of transformative justice, and recently co-founder of The African Nova Scotian Freedom School and co-founder of BLM Solidarity Fund, which has raised over \$300,000 since March 2020 for community members in need. She is also a nationally recognized expert on implicit bias and consults for a number of federal agencies. Most importantly, she is mother to Ade, Zora, and Sade.



Hirut Melaku is an emerging scholar and healthcare practitioner (lactation consultant, birth companion), concerned with racial inequity, sexual violence, and LGBTQ2S+ issues. The investigative and reporting work that she has done in the last 20 years has been used by many, including the United Nations, to determine humanitarian aid, and by local players to develop initiatives, programs, and interventions in the area of mental health and gender-based violence. Transformative justice, as a framework, guides all aspects of her work including her current role as a facilitator and advisor to the Toronto Dance



Community in addressing workplace harm. She contributes to repairing the world as a healer, nurturer, and as a speaker of truth. Hirut credits her ancestors, distinctive background, and identities (Beta Israel, queer, mother of a gifted child who is differently-abled) for keeping her grounded and connected. She is a co-founder of the Third Eye Collective, a survivor-led organization for Black women who have experienced violence. Click on the following links to read about some of Hirut's work: www.hirut.org, www.thirdeyemontreal.com.

Nneka MacGregor is the co-founder and Executive Director of the Women's Centre for Social Justice, better known as WomenatthecentrE, a unique non-profit organisation created by and for women and trans survivors of gender-based violence globally. She is also co-host of the engaging podcast – 'What's Your Safe Word?'



Nneka is an advocate who works with governments, organizations and individuals to transform lives and build violence-free communities. In 2006, she was selected by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario as one of 13 experts tasked to review the range of services provided to women and children in the province, identify gaps and make recommendations. In June, 2016, she was appointed by the Canadian government to the Advisory Council on the Federal Strategy Against Gender-Based Violence. An international speaker and trainer, she has developed and facilitated training to various sectors, and was one of the 12 Canadian women delegates appointed to the UNCSW63. Nneka is also an Expert Advisory Panel Member of the [Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability](#).

Anti-Black Racism and Service Provision in the GBV Sector

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 1-3 p.m. ET

Presenters: Dr. Jacqueline Benn-John, Debbie Owusu-Akyeaah,
Abi Ajibolade, Sophia Sahrane

Moderator: Yamikani Msosa

This session focuses specifically on how anti-Black racism directly impacts service provision in the gender-based violence sector. Listen as leading experts address challenging issues relating to the practices and policies within our sector. The session invites participants to reflect critically on the ways that gender-based violence work can be more accountable to Black survivors of violence.

Jacqueline Benn-John, Ph.D is the Executive Director of the Women's Support Network of York Region, a consultant and community engaged educator. Her doctoral research seeks to understand the perspectives and experiences of African/Black women who provide service to survivors of sexual violence, and the multifaceted and intersectional modes of expressing resistance through feminist



violence prevention work in rape crisis centres within Ontario.

Jacqueline has over 25 years of grassroots and professional work experience in the social service sector, feminist organizing and community development, and within family service and anti-violence organizations. Since 2001, Jacqueline has been cofacilitating groups supporting mothers and children in healing from their exposure to violence within the home. She also cofacilitates group education/counselling to individuals who have been mandated by the court to attend the Partner Assault Response program in response to a criminal charge involving domestic violence.

Jacqueline has also advised the Ontario government on numerous program and policy initiatives in the anti-violence sector. In 2017, as a Senior Research Consultant, Jacqueline collaborated with Shore Consulting to undertake a review of the Ministry of the Status of Women's Sexual Violence Counselling Services and Helplines across Ontario. Since 2016, she develops and delivers trainings for the Toronto Hostels Training Centre: *Working with Abused Women and Children and Working with Families with special considerations for Immigrant and Refugee communities.*

Jacqueline has been teaching for the past 13 years across the greater Toronto area. Currently, she is teaching in the Criminal Justice, and Community and Justice Services Programs at Humber Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning in courses such as Crisis Intervention and Trauma, Mental Health Foundations, Conflict Management and Counselling Theory and Practice. Jacqueline also taught in the Assaulted Women's and Children's Counsellor/ Advocate Program at George Brown College for 12 years.

Debbie Owusu- Akyeeah is a Black feminist with over 8 years of local and international advocacy experience in a variety of roles ranging from programming and counselling to policy analysis and project management. She is the new Executive Director at the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity (CCGSD).



She has had the pleasure of bridging her passion for social justice with international development at Oxfam Canada and volunteering with feminists organizations like the Ottawa Dyke March, Harmony House Women's Shelter, and Planned Parenthood Ottawa. She is also a board member of the Venus Envy Access Fund creating funding opportunities for members of the community she loves so much.

When Debbie isn't yelling into a megaphone at protests or organizing events, she's probably on a field somewhere playing rugby. Or baking a cake.

Over the past 25 years, Abi Ajibolade has been committed to end violence against women and children. As an attorney called to the Nigerian Bar, and with a Certificate in Qualification from the Federation of Law Societies of Canada, Abi is a social justice worker with extensive experience in women's and children's rights advocacy.

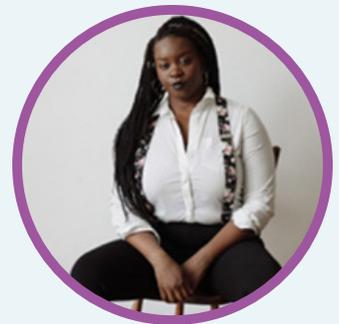


Her role in the Federal government of Nigeria's legal system included playing an integral part in a committee involved in a nation-wide human rights legislation review. In Abi's current role as Executive Director of The Redwood, she continues to be a strong advocate and change-maker working to advance gender equity, social and racial justice, and ending all forms of gender-based violence. Abi's forward-thinking leadership and innovation in practice continues to be recognized. In 2018 she received the Visionary Leadership award from Ontario Office Victims of Crime and was awarded a scholarship at Harvard Business School's program, Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management. More recently, she was awarded the winner for 2019 Pioneers for Change from Skills for Change. Abi is a Registered Psychotherapist, Certified Mental Health First Aid Instructor, Certified Crisis Prevention Intervention Instructor, and Commissioner for Taking Affidavits in the Province of Ontario.

Sophia Sahrane is a BIPOC activist, afrofeminist, and archivist from Montreal focusing her efforts against anti-black racism, misogynoir, the criminalization and policing of racialized bodies, involved in community organizations and initiatives like the Librairie Racines, and Black Lives Matter Montreal and other organizing around gender-based violence and disability experienced by BIPOC folk. She also focuses her activism, community organizing, and research on the lack of representation and erasure of Black folk in education, archives, and throughout history which perpetuates white dominance and the subordination of Black, Indigenous and racialized peoples. She is working on establishing a Black studies program at Concordia University, where she graduated from the School of Community, Public Affairs and Public Policy, and holds a masters certificate in archiving from the Université du Québec à Montréal. Sophia is currently working at the Disabled women's network Canada (DAWN) as Project coordinator.



Yamikani Msosa (they/them or ze-hir) is a black genderqueer Malawian arrivant-settler currently living within the Dish With One Spoon Wampum treaty territory, who grew up on Algonquin Territory. Yami is an anti-violence educator, support worker and movement based facilitator. They love building containers for connections to be forged, and holding space for individual, community, and systems transformation. Their lens to the anti-violence liberation movement is intersectional and centers disability and healing justice organizing. Yamikani has held positions such as Black Academic Success and Engagement Coordinator at Humber College and Vice-Chair of Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres. Yami currently sits on the eQuality Project Advisory and is featured in Violence Interrupted: Confronting Sexual Violence on University Campuses with Jane Bailey and Suzie Dunn. In 2017, Yamikani founded Seeds, a yoga program that centers the needs of survivors of sexual violence. [Click here to learn more about hir work http://www.yamimsosa.com](http://www.yamimsosa.com).



ASHE: Arts, Spirituality, Healing, and Embodiment

Wednesday, Jan. 20, 1-3 p.m. ET

Presenters: Kyisha Williams and Ravyn Wngz

Moderator: Esther Enyolu

This interactive workshop will offer a simple embodied practice for healing through the Arts. The facilitators, Ravyn and Kyisha, will share experiences of their embodied practices. The hope is to inspire a conversation that will open participants to new ways of healing and activism, which address anti-Black racism at its core. Allowing participants to reckon with their responsibility to eradicating white supremacy and anti-Black racism.

Kyisha Williams (name/they/she) is a Toronto-born Black queer actor, director, model, and health promoter. Kyisha fuses public health (MPH) and digital media by creating socially relevant content that discusses health and promotes healthy sexuality/consent culture. Kyisha directed their first short film *Red Lips* [cages for Black girls] in 2010. They then completed a Masters in Public Health in 2016. In 2018, they co-directed their second short film, *Queen of Hearts*, winner of the 2017 BravoFact pitch competition, now gaining international attention. Kyisha has acted in over 20 short films and TV shows.



[Click here for Kyisha's website](#)

[Click here for Kyisha's Instagram](#)

[Click here for Kyisha's Patreon](#)

[Click here for Kyisha's Facebook](#)

[Click here for Kyisha's Twitter](#)

Ravyn Wngz is an African, Bermudian, Mohawk, 2Spirit, queer and transcendent individual. Ravyn aims to challenge mainstream arts and dance spaces by sharing her stories while continuing to create opportunities and platforms for marginalized LGBTTIQQ2S people with a focus on African/Black communities. Ravyn is a co-founder of ILL NANA/DiverseCity Dance Company - a queer multiracial dance company that aims to change the landscape of dance and provide accessible affirming dance education to the LGBTTIQQ2S community. Ravyn is the artistic director of OVA - Outrageous Victorious Africans Collective - a Dance/Theatre collective that share the contemporary voices of African/Black and Queer/Self Identified storytellers. Ravyn is part of Black Lives Matter Toronto steering committee, a group who are committed to eradicating all forms of anti-Black racism, supporting Black healing and liberating Black communities.



Esther Enyolu is a trauma informed counsellor and a guest lecturer and trainer on gender-based violence, diversity and inclusion, human rights and social justice. Her work is grounded in an integrated anti-racist/anti-oppression and feminist analysis, a holistic approach in which a person's experience and realities of life are not fragmented and divided. Esther has been working in the human service field for over 30 years. She has a BA (Hons) in Sociology and Women's Studies, Trauma Informed Counselling Certification, and an MBA. She is married with 3 adult children.



The Learning Network

The Learning Network is committed to ending gender-based violence through knowledge mobilization that identifies gaps and emerging issues, establishes meaningful collaborations, and values diverse ways of knowing. We develop evidence-informed resources, facilitate knowledge exchanges, present webinars and resource spotlights, and promote Ontario-based resources for the violence against women sector and its allies.

Learning Network Provincial Advisory Group

The Learning Network benefits from the input of a Provincial Advisory Group. They provide expertise on research, curriculum development, practice, and prevention.



Learn more about the Provincial Advisory Group on our website:

<http://vawlearningnetwork.ca/about-us/provincial-advisory-group.html>

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