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ISSUE NO. 2

# IGNITE

*Newsletter of the Section on Black Psychology,  
Canadian Psychological Association*



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# **What is IGNITE?**

The main objective of the IGNITE newsletter is to share information relating to Black Psychology. In doing so, we hope that we can *spark, or IGNITE, a passion for Black Psychology* within those who are interested in this area of study, as well as promote and advance practitioners, educators, students, and scientists of psychology who identify as Black and/or are concerned about psychology-related issues that impact Black people.

*“...it is time that we ignite a passion for psychology in Black students who have no idea about the number of opportunities available in the psychology profession.”*

*- Barbara Afram*

**The Chair's  
Corner**  
with  
**Ms. Kafui Sawyer**



***Black is Beautiful -  
The Legacy of  
Freedom from Racism***

*Though our bodies differ in colour from yours;  
yet our souls are similar in desire for freedom*  
(Vox Africanorum, Maryland Gazette, 1783).

I am writing this article from Washington, DC, my first visit to this wonderful city with a rich history of the African people in the United States and Canada. As I walked through the African History Museum, the Lincoln Memorial and Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial with my White husband, we felt sad and angry about the 400 years of slavery the African people suffered at the hands of

Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Portugal. We were also appalled and disgusted that Canada is still a monarchy. How does Canada not have a National Museum of History for African, Caribbean, and Black Canadians? Why does Canada point to the Americans for racial practices and injustice when Canada has always been on the side of Great Britain, the country with the largest number of forced, treacherous, and traumatic migrations of the African people during Transatlantic slavery?

Please allow me to briefly share with those who do not know this history. From 1562 to 1807, the British enslaved over 3.3 million Africans in the Americas (i.e., the United

States, Caribbean, and Canada). The British dominated Transatlantic Slavery in the 1700s to attain power, wealth, and influence in New America, including Canada. Some may not have been taught this history in primary and secondary education, and Canada's history with slavery has seemingly been silenced or forgotten. Let's not forget, the British and France had significant influence in colonizing the Indigenous people here in Canada. These same colonizers were also Slave owners! They used free labour and slavery to accomplish this goal.



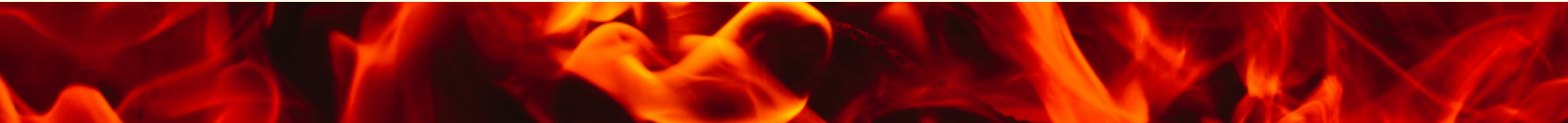
[Clara Brown, "Angel of the Rockies"](#)

Have you ever imagined what wealth and legacy you would leave for generations if you had free labour for 400 hundred years? No wonder Canada is a rich country! Canada was built on the backs of African (Black) and Indigenous slaves. Nevertheless, Black people still experience overwhelming racism due to the colour of their skin. When Black people show up, they never get to hide their skin colour but can hide their sexual orientation, position in society, education, and other demographic information. Your colour is your colour! Your colour is what is evident to the visible eye.

So, let's focus on a new way of looking at our colour: ***Black is Beautiful, Black is Powerful, Black is Resilient, Black is Joyful, Black is Remarkable, Black is Strong, Black is Immaculate, Black is Everything!***

The story of Black people is a remarkable story of resilience, power, and joy. Despite the agony of slavery, segregation, oppression, racism, and poverty, we have overcome and continue to rise higher. We will not be moved, we will not give up, and we will persevere until the same rights awarded to White people are extended to our people, wherever they are in the diaspora.

As I reach the end of my term as Chair, I am grateful to have dreamt about the Black Psychology Section of the Canadian



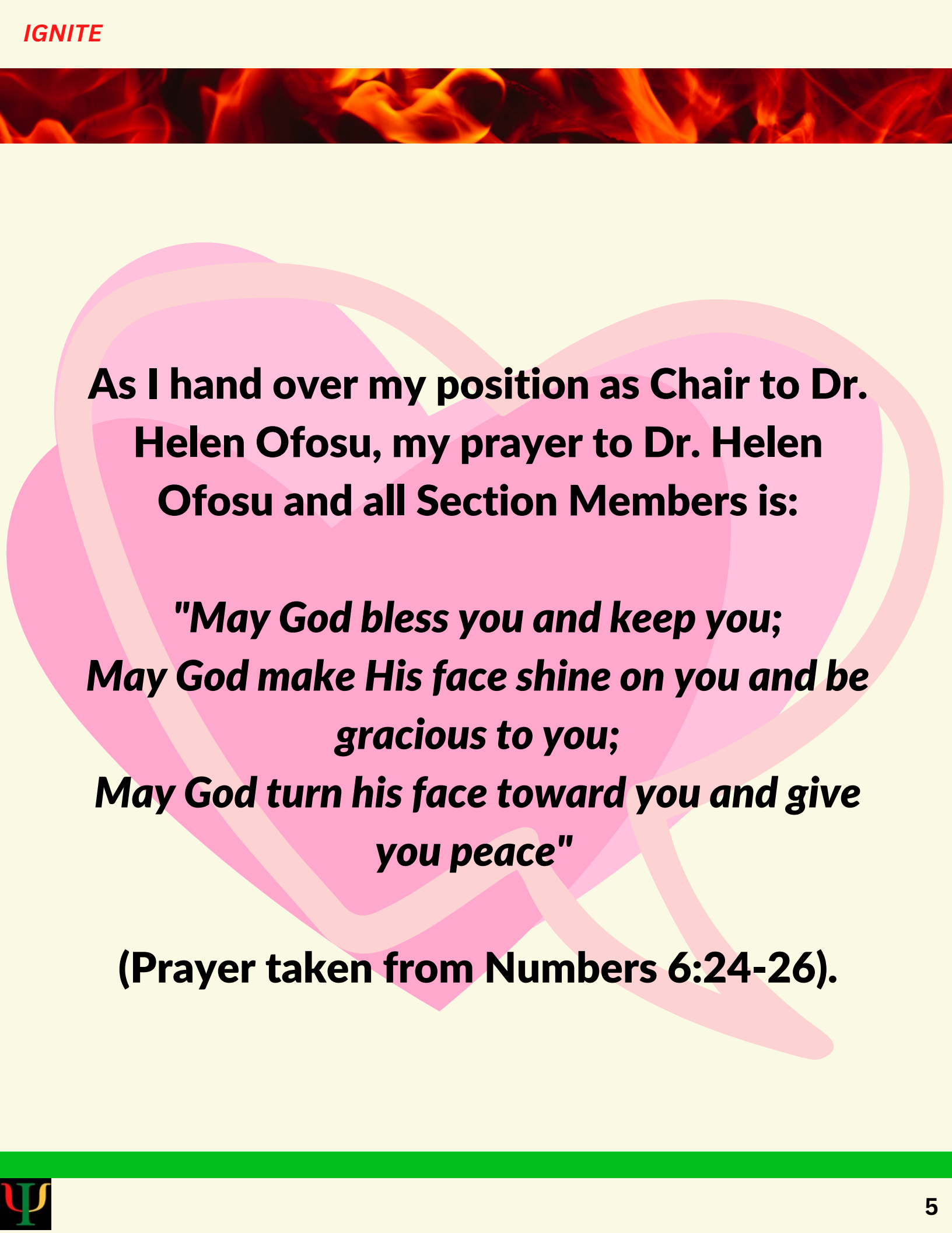
Psychological Association. I am grateful to have joined with great friends and allies who brought this Section to reality. With a current number of 90 Section members, I believe we have come to join the efforts against racism and promote the well-being of Black people in Canada. Together, we are changing the history of ***Black Trauma*** into ***Black Joy***.

My life calling is to share the good news of equity, racial diversity, inclusion, and belonging. We often only know about equity on paper, but the practicality of it is far from our lived experiences. I have to be devoted to equity for the sake of history, my ancestors, my biracial children and their future children, and my people in Canada. I love being Black – it is the only colour I know. ***Black is Beautiful!*** My colour reminds me of who I am and who I represent!

At any given opportunity, always leave a legacy of freedom because you know who you are, and you are beautiful. ***Black is Beautiful!***

Further Readings:

1. [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org)
2. The hanging of Angelique: The untold story of Canadian slavery and the burning of old Montreal by Dr. Afua Cooper (Dalhousie University).



**As I hand over my position as Chair to Dr. Helen Ofosu, my prayer to Dr. Helen Ofosu and all Section Members is:**

***"May God bless you and keep you;  
May God make His face shine on you and be  
gracious to you;  
May God turn his face toward you and give  
you peace"***

**(Prayer taken from Numbers 6:24-26).**

# NEWSFLASH

**Incoming**  
**Section Chair**  
**Dr. Helen Ofosu**



We are thrilled to announce that Dr. Helen Ofosu will be taking over as **Chair of the Section on Black Psychology** once the Annual General Meeting concludes in June 2023! We are **beyond** excited to see what Dr. Ofosu has in store for the Section, and cannot thank her enough for taking on this important role! We also cannot thank **Ms. Kafui Sawyer (our current Chair)** enough for her dedication to this Section, and are happy that she will continue to support our Section in her role as **Past Chair!**

**Congratulations, Dr. Ofosu!**



# **Black Psychology** **- What is it and** **why is it** **important?**

## **Dr. Helen Ofosu**

**Q1: I suppose the first question, which seems a bit obvious, is “What is Black Psychology?”**

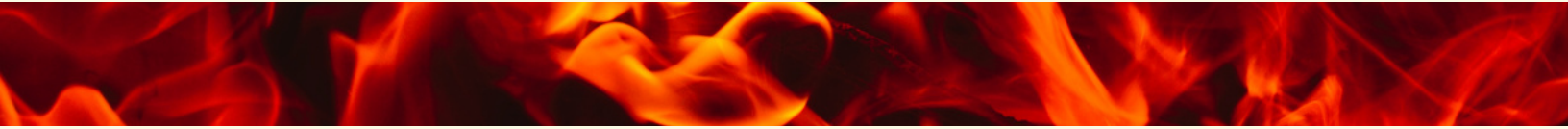
**Answer:** While I was a graduate student in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, I took a mandatory course on the History of Psychology. We had to write a research paper that linked a period of history to Psychology. Windsor is directly across the river from Detroit, Michigan. When I visited Detroit, I was struck by the fact that even in the 1990s, many of the high-rise buildings that were damaged during the riots of the 1960s had never been repaired. The buildings still stood abandoned and derelict; the area around the windows was still blackened from flames. This inspired me to focus on the Civil Rights Movement and what was happening in

the field of Psychology.

This research led me to a book called *Black Psychology* (Third Edition) which was published in 1991. The book addressed the need to develop a Black perspective on the conceptualization, research, and practice of Psychology. With so few Black psychologists, there was, and still is, a significant gap in the field.

In December 2021, I co-founded the Section on Black Psychology within the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) with four other members: Ms. Kafui Sawyer, Dr. Anita Shaw, Dr. Erin Beettam, and Dr. Monnica Williams.





The Section’s mission is to promote and advance practitioners, educators, students, and scientists of Psychology who identify as Black and who are concerned about Psychology-related issues that impact Black people.

**Q2: *Being a Black woman and Psychologist how have you found the term Black Psychology to be useful for other Black professionals/workers who are in differing fields?***

**Answer:** It is still early days, so I don’t have a lot of experience on this front. I will say that, so far, nobody has asked even though I assume there should be some curiosity.

In fairness, however, I don’t talk about Black Psychology all that often. Typically, it only

comes up in the context of the Black Psychology Section of the CPA. Also, I support a full spectrum of clients, only some of them are Black.

It’s worth noting that there are affinity groups within other professions including the Black Physicians of Canada and the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers. It’s worth noting that those other groups are independent rather than part of a larger (predominantly White) association.

**Q3: *Why is Black psychology needed; why does it deserve to be defined, explored and most importantly accepted in our places of work?***

**Answer:** The double-pandemic of Covid-19 and racism has been a huge reminder of the gap that exists within the field of Psychology,



particularly in Canada.

I graduated with my PhD in Psychology over 20 years ago. During the almost 10 years of my post-secondary university journey, the only racialized professor I ever had was an Asian woman during my graduate studies. Since graduating, I've only met a handful of other Black psychologists and most of them got their training outside of Canada.

From what I've seen, there are few Black or other racialized professors of Psychology. This means that the research, teaching, and practice of Psychology are from a predominantly White perspective. This is not inclusive, and it makes it harder for psychologists to address the vast range of issues (e.g., mental health, the workplace, leadership, social justice issues, data-based policy, etc.) that are relevant to Psychology and occur in the modern world.

**Q4: Have you or any of your Black colleagues/peers found much "Blacklash" from those who do not want to acknowledge or even believe in Black Psychology as a distinct field within the discipline?**

**Answer:** I am not aware of any "Blacklash" that is attributable to the Black Psychology Section of the CPA or Black Psychology, in general, but I would imagine that there are people who don't believe that Black

Psychology is legitimate. Some will argue that they don't see colour, so this topic is unnecessary. At the other end of the spectrum, and hopefully this is a small minority, there are probably others who don't believe that Black Psychology warrants special attention because they don't think Black people warrant the attention.

I would also say that the few Black psychologists whom I know have always had to cope with the consequences associated with individual and systemic forms of racism. This is not unique to the practice of Psychology, Black people in other fields and professions have similar experiences. To be fair, I have always enjoyed the friendship and support of some White psychologists, professors of Psychology, and aspiring psychologists. At the same time, I've experienced instances of exclusion (or worse) and times when others missed opportunities to be better allies.

*Interested in a Black Psychology Hoodie or other progressive clothing that highlight Indigenous issues, Black Excellence, or allyship? Use this COUPON CODE "BlkPsychCPA" to save 10% on your purchase. Or use this [URL](#).*



# **A Cross-Systems Approach to Inclusion**

**Dr. Ester Cole**

***Keynote Address to the Ninth Annual Convention of the National Consortium of Task Forces and Commission on Racial and Ethnic Bias in the Courts, Las Vegas, Nevada, May 10, 1997.***

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am honoured to speak to you today on a topic which is dear to my heart. As I thought about formulating this address, I faced the inevitable problem of finding a way to condense views, beliefs, and a way of being into a relatively short speech. I would like to begin by sharing with you a quote from T.S. Eliot who observed that:

***"We must not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time".***

Eliot himself was in the news lately as we discover that he was far from being an inclusive man. Nevertheless, the wisdom of

his words is timely as we face systems' challenges which are interlinked with social, demographic, economic, legal, and pedagogical trends. I do hope that by listening to me in the company of like-minded people, we will come away adjusting our personal kaleidoscopes and continue our interdependent dialogue on inclusiveness within and across systems.

Equity laws, professional and ethical standards and advocacy are first building blocks towards inclusiveness. Had those been sufficient, the face of our communities and the issues courts and tribunals are grappling with, would undoubtedly been of a different nature.

However, we must recognize and accept that professional peer gatherings within homogeneous systems do not necessarily translate progressive legislation into actualized daily practices. In fact, even within systems, those who have administrative powers and mandates to deal with macro level needs, tend to get bogged down by economic cutbacks, red tape bureaucracy and group dynamics. Moreover, even the professional language used in documentation across systems tends to be ceremonial and laden with jargon. Consequently, we have little time or will to translate the constructs and language of our systems either to those who are the consumers of its' specific mandates, or to stakeholders in other systems. What follows from this is inevitably a gap in comfort levels when interacting across systems, perceptions of bias, and an inability to see the forest for the trees, since our minds and souls are invested in our professional persona and the system's culture which we have become part of.

My speech will consequently aim to focus on issues concerning (a) the self (b) social perceptions (c) facts about our social fabric, and (d) the role systematic professional development can play in beginning to bridge daily gaps at the micro and hopefully macro levels.

In the worlds of law, education, and mental

health services, we view ourselves as advocates, helpers, and champions of the hurt and deprived. And so, we should. After all, our collective status in society reflects its' evolution and refinement over time. Yet, the magnitude of identified needs we face in our professional roles often leads us to homogenize problems and resulting solutions. By doing so, however, we must recognize that we tend to perpetuate the gap between our well-intentioned formulations and our effective short-term deeds. This, in turn, has created among many of those most deeply affected a mistrust of our powerful institutions which purport to represent collective ownership.

In the 60s, the overused cliché "if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem" was attributed to youth rebellion. In the 90s, however, we tend to lose patience with minority advocacy groups which remind us of the need for new solutions since they challenge our collective image as social ambassadors. "We" have solutions to our identification of "their" problems. This dynamic of miscommunication, I am saddened to say, has not allowed for building long-term bridges, even when research findings have clearly documented a gap analysis between equity laws and their fragmented application in practice.

The English historian Harold Laski noted from

his study of Nineteenth Century British history that it usually takes about 30 years for recommendations of Commissions and task forces to be fully implemented. By that time, new social issues surface or reach a crisis point, which we address, yet again, by establishing Commissions, task forces or at the very least, committees and focus groups. However, those who feel marginalized continue to point that the ongoing issues of inequity remain fundamentally unresolved. This position which becomes second nature does not, however, lead to the integration of mainstream solutions.

In order to reframe the issues and their solutions, I suggest that a place to start for all involved must be the self, before we reconnect with systems and society. In our nonprofessional persona, where do we each stand on issues concerning race, gender, ethnicity or disability? Where do we want to be? Is there room for growth? These questions seem so elementary since we know ourselves in judicial robes and professional titles. After all, we are the authors, mediators, and enforcers of human rights codes, ethical practice standards, and professional review bodies.

Pursuing the exploration of self in society, imagine yourself at a social gathering where nobody can answer the question "What do you do?". A gathering in which what we say

and the way we act will provide the only frame of reference about who we are. This is quite different from being able to introduce yourself as "Justice" or "Dr.", isn't it? We are a society which places us very quickly as those who are powerful and deserve social attention and those who are not. Naively, we also project on to others qualities which equate power with virtuous and goodness.

A couple of years ago, I gave a workshop to Ontario Judges on Equity and their role. One of the Judges questioned the need for doing so by stating: *"I am a judge, of course I am objective and colour blind, it is my duty!"*. I asked him if he was gender blind to me as a speaker. I told him and his colleagues about a Black C.E.O. in Toronto who oversees a budget bigger than that of many third world countries, but who is not sure how he will be treated by the police if stopped in his car at night. I shared with them my feelings as a woman, who can be on the lecture circuit by day and ill at ease walking to my car at night. With established trust in the group, one of the judges sought validation about *"hoping I was fair over the years"*. Another reflected that he has worked all his professional life in a rural community, *"where everybody looks like me and has the same values"*.

Without connecting the private self to our professional persona, we are in constant danger of widening the collective gap



between systematic mandates and actual performance. To take an example from the Canadian context, in the report which led to the establishment of Ontario's Commission on Systemic Racism in the Criminal Justice System, Stephen Lewis, at one time Canada's Ambassador to the United Nations, noted that:

***"Race relations training for judges, where it exists at all, is pretty elemental. Like everyone else, I embrace the principle of an independent judiciary, but judges are mortal, and most mortals need help".***

Responding to this Mr. Justice Dubin, at that time Ontario's Chief Justice, remarked in a 1994 speech entitled "The Future of Our Profession and of Our Justice System" that:

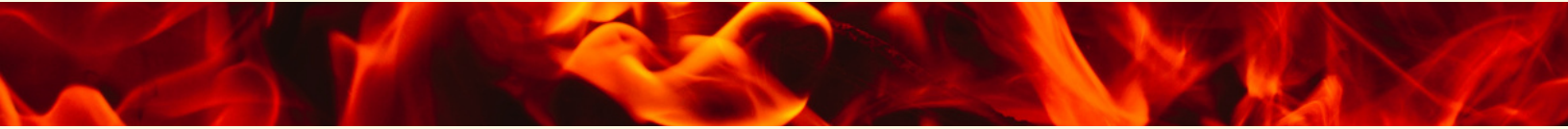
***"Our justice system can survive, only so long as it continues to have the confidence of the public it is designed to serve.... That confidence, however, must be earned and not assumed."***

What we think of our self and the way we project are complex psychological issues. It is the sum of our personal histories and shaped values which govern our deeds in the family, at school and in the workplace. Had it not been for my accent, I could project as a professional person who is one of the mainstreams "who made it". If I were not White, strong, and adaptable, would I have

made it? My values were shaped long ago by refugee parents who came to Israel in 1950 following the Holocaust. My mother was in a concentration camp and was separated from my father for three years while he slaved in a labour camp. They lost two babies and many family members. Yet, when I was raised, education, morals and justice were values they emphasized despite past trauma, poor living conditions and economic hardships. Parenting and family cohesion were about the only things they had control over and thus shaped my future.

A few years ago, I ran a support group for single inner-city mothers in Toronto. I was pleased to get a compliment from one of the women who told me one day: "Dr. Cole, You're o.k. You look like the Brady Bunch, but you understand us". This woman moved from being on welfare to sustaining employment as an educational assistance in one of the downtown schools. Personally, I might look like the Brady Bunch, but I never forget where I came from and in my travels hope to remember where we are headed collectively.

Clearly, none of us is born with destructive notions of exclusion, biases, racism, or superiority. Stereotyping of the self and others is a learned behaviour which has vague philosophical underpinnings comprised of unidimensional ideas of discrimination.



These types of ideas have led to individual and institutional expressions which destabilize communities and provoke social hostility.

We have come a long way as North American societies by using the Law to remove explicit racism. Not that long ago, systemic biases excluded segments of society from sharing political, educational, and economic power. The "Whites only" signs of inequality have been removed by enacting legislation. We memorize, with pain for some and with discomfort for others, extreme racism including Canada's refusal to accept Jewish refugees during the 2nd World War since "one was too many". The segregation of Japanese citizens during that time provides another recent example of systematic exclusion. Individual stories of overt or covert discrimination because of one's ancestry can tell volumes about our recent past and about the long roads we have yet to travel.

Given today's audience, I would like to tell you a story about a man named Bora Laskin. He was a gold medal winner at Toronto's Osgoode Law School in the 1930s. Following graduation, he took post graduate studies at Harvard, where he studied with Frankfurter and other giants of American legal scholarship. Nevertheless, upon his return to Canada, he was not offered a teaching position at his alma mater because of his

Jewish ancestry. In consequence, he and some outraged members of the Osgoode faculty were forced to move to the University of Toronto to open a competitive faculty. In later years, Bora Laskin became Chief Justice of Canada in the 1960s and 1970s. Obviously, he was an exceptional man of great esteem. There aren't many like him who overcome injustice by galvanizing others to follow social principles. Many individuals with fewer gifts continue to suffer from both overt and covert discrimination and represent countless untold stories.

Covert discrimination, however, is a more subtle form of exclusion which is by far harder to eliminate. As we are beginning to realize and document, racism is but one form of exclusion. Biases concerning disabilities, language, gender, age, and social class continue to permeate social structures despite political infrastructures which mandate inclusion. For example, unlike the American "melting pot" philosophy, Canada's 1982 constitution formalized the recognition of a "mosaic" model of multiculturalism. This conceptual framework of the "mosaic" celebrates bicultural identities where contribution to the society as a whole does not detract from one's cultural origins. Those who represent minority groups, however, view this mosaic in many ways as being a "vertical" one, with some groups continuing to view themselves and/or being viewed by

others as more prominent.

From examining the self, I now turn to some thoughts about the trappings of perception. Groundbreaking policies concerning human rights, multiculturalism, race relations, immigration, education and equity are the foundation for daily practices while dealing to the best of our abilities with newly emerging social realities and needs. However, even advocates can become caught in the world of abstract thoughts and the trap of "knowing about" rather than "knowing through" being, feeling and behaving. We must recognize and accept that we are far from becoming homogenized in social status as a consequence of equal rights. Peggy McIntosh of Wellesley College has provided in her publications numerous examples of how much we take for granted when our focus remains cerebral and intellectual. In her 1990 essay "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible knapsack" (Independent School), she noted:

***"I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group...."***

She later reflects on the matrix of White privilege by stating:

***"My skin colour was an asset for any move I was educated to want to make. I could think of myself as belonging in major ways and of making social systems work for me".***

Parallel with progressive and corrective legislation, our textbooks, publications and media packaged information unfortunately continue to promote "single-system seeing" of mono-cultural values. We are in a complex process of redefining inclusiveness, a process which involves rethinking organizational structures, where distribution of resources and services require more balanced uses of abilities and representation. Clearly, none of us is as valuable as all of us collectively. However, away from democratic rhetoric, this type of balanced change requires a commitment to affirming the essential dialogue between the self, the world of knowledge and others.

Having said this, however, we must continue to acknowledge that social perceptions and misperceptions can and do act as a negative catalyst against inclusiveness. Thus, they impact on political decision-making and allocation of resources. For example, despite the constitutional enshrining of Canadian multiculturalism, its critics frequently note that it works against a united Canada. Moreover, they question "the money that flows to multiculturalism in dozens of ways". A recent national newspaper report (Globe



and Mail, March 15, 1997) concluded that:

***"Canadians are increasingly putting up walls around their separate cultures, communicating in the euphemisms of political correctness and insisting on asserting group rights over individual rights".***

The issue of public perception and its long-term impact of society must be kept front and centre while grappling with the promotion of equity. Social psychology studies have documented time and again how easy it is to arrive at cognitive dissonance when people become homogenized as faceless minority groups. Conversely, the need for a social reference group tends to result in cognitive consonance, a sense of belonging and misperceptions about others.

The pessimists among us should not become disheartened. Studies have also concluded that public opinion surveys indicate positive tolerance trends and a reduction of prejudice generally. For example, in a 1991 report on Economic and Social Impact of Immigration, the Economic Council of Canada reviewed evidence of trends in prejudice and tolerance over three decades.

The 64 different public opinion surveys reviewed, documented a positive relationship between the proportion of visible minority immigrants and various tolerant attitudes.

Conversely, there was also evidence that the combination of high or worsening unemployment rates and a high proportion of visible minorities in a community is associated with more unfavourable views of immigration.

The pace of change in demographic trends is by far more rapid than many realize, and misconceptions must be re-evaluated and brought to a test. Let us now look briefly at the self-report questionnaire on perceptions and facts which I have distributed. The name of this exercise is "If the World were a Village of 1,000 People".

As you can see, there is some wisdom in the overused fashionable statement about the value of seeing oneself as "a lifelong learner".

I now turn to my third theme, "some facts about our social fabric". The demographic transformation of North American communities has focussed attention on issues related to equity and effective interventions for families. Law, Education and Mental Health professionals are faced with the complexities created by socio-economic changes, resettlement, communication barriers and disruption in stable and supportive attachments for families. In this context, one must question the fundamental value of systems which perpetuate hierarchical structures of self importance

with little or fragmented communication across systems; documenting once more that the locus of the problem is in the individual who interacts with a specific system, does little to help bridge gaps. Rather, most maladjusted behaviours should be viewed as reflective of disequilibrium in the interaction processes occurring between the individual and his or her environment. Thus, it follows that the helping professions should evaluate their roles within systems and across systems. By clarifying social trends and needs one can move to redesign more comprehensive service frameworks, monitor implementations of action plans, and assess outcomes.

Data about the quality of life for the young in wealthy North America leaves much to be desired. One in 5 Canadian school-aged children lives in poverty. Violence directed toward the self has steadily increased over the past three decades. Suicide has become the second or third leading cause of death for young people. In the United States, rates of violence and victimization have increased significantly. Psychosocial risk factors associated with high rates of mental health problems in children include poverty, parental psychopathology, and maltreatment. These risk factors are also linked to alienation, poor socialization, and poor school performance.

North American societies have thrived over the centuries because of the richness and synergy brought by immigrants and their offspring. However, recent American data has called attention to the fact that immigrant and minority school-age children are the poorest in society. About 40% of children under the age of six are non-White, half of whom speak a language other than English. Many reside in racially homogeneous neighbourhoods and are over-represented in lower educational streams in public schools.

In urban inner-city schools, the dropout rate is reported to be 50% among Black and Hispanic students. Education programs for slow learners include over 41% of Black students, although they only represent 21% of the total school population. In contrast, in both the United States and Canada, minority students tend to be under-represented in gifted or enrichment programs.

Language minority students face great challenges in adaptability and scholastic achievement. Learning English as a second language is a key factor in social adjustment. It provides a bridge for knowledge, independence, and socialization. In the city of Toronto, 1 in 4 students enters school speaking English as a second language. This includes both those born in Canada as well as those born in other countries.

Second language learners comprise heterogeneous groups whose language development is linked to psychological, socio-cultural, and educational factors. Studies have documented that there is great variability in how long it takes people to learn English and what kinds of instructional interventions they may need in the process. As such, these students and adult learners tend to be at a disadvantage when faced with selection criteria and tests which do not adequately differentiate between language related problems and the actual level of knowledge people possess. In addition, U.S. studies document that low SES schools with limited resources, tend to use standardized tests for placement decisions and tracing of students more than is the practice in high SES schools.

As social advocates, we must continue to promote equality of educational opportunity and equity of outcomes. That is to say, that all future adults will be expected to perform to the best of their abilities in learning environments which have clear standards, and which provide students with necessary learning experiences in order to develop competencies. Such environments must reassure parents and the public at large, that all students are valued, respected, and that inequities will be challenged.

The results of such a comprehensive

framework speak for themselves. In the west end of Toronto, for example, a recent five-year study documents that in schools which focus on equity practices, significant gains have been made. The change in school climate; staff attitude and increased parental involvement enhanced children's learning outcomes and social gains. Thus, the world of education continues to be, by far, the most promising of systems.

So far, I have highlighted issues concerning the self, social perceptions, demographic trends and concerns for our children who will support the finest of our future institutions. I would like to close by dealing with the topic of bringing about system's change through professional development, a practice cherished by some and dreaded by others. The essential elements of best practices in this area are based on adult learning theory.

First, planners of staff development must include all professionals within a system, regardless of their position. Second, note that substantive change in practice typically takes four to seven years to achieve, and requires multiple, diverse, and ongoing supports. Adult learners are often motivated to participate when they perceive that the Learning is related to their needs, rather than an attack on their competence. Last, appropriate resources and constructive feedback are likely to stimulate shared understanding and new approaches to exclusive practices.

Too often, systems embark on "paint by numbers" professional development which does not translate into best practices. Claiming that human resources are the priority of an organization and that our "paradigms have to shift" does not necessarily make for a more inclusive environment. It is the setting of priorities, expectations, growth goals and ongoing evaluation which will teach us how far we have come.

In *The Fifth Discipline* (1990), Peter Senge states that building an organization's progressive culture is an essential function of those in positions of power. "Talking the right talk", has become a lot more common than "walking the talk". An impressive metaphor about the link between ideas and actions in systems is advocated by Max DePree in his 1992 book *Leadership Jazz*. He states that at the core of becoming authentic leaders in our professional and social roles is the need to "always connect one's voice and one's touch". The voice is the expression of our principled beliefs in the common good while the touch is the applied actions and responses which demonstrate our social self-actualization.

Social commitment begins with sustained personal integrity. For us, in this gathering, social commitment is a given. Yet, when all is said and done, please reflect on the following categories related to the notion of

inclusiveness in your own system: a) policies and procedures; b) access to information; c) promotion practices; d) hiring practices; e) decision making; f) resource allocations.

Are women and people of colour under-represented in your system? Why? Are language minority people facing barriers because of unqualified translators and interpreters? What are the barriers to inclusivity? Who helps you build bridges? What strategies do you use to overcome obstacles? How often? What kinds of resources do you require to maintain your objectivity and adaptability? What accountability studies do you participate in? Has action research changed your practices? Do you have feedback data on court processes as perceived by people of colour? When bias in outcomes is perceived what is done about it? Is the role and function of your system clearly explained to ethnic communities? When was the last time you visited a school? Visited a jail? Visited a community crisis centre? Do you find that professionals in other systems provide you with clear documentation in order to aid your judicial work?

As you reflect on your version of Dupree's "touch", remember the "voice":

***"And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time".***





**“I just want Black families to feel welcomed, heard, and seen” : An interview with Ayana Woodward**

**Jennifer McWilliams (JM) interviewed Ayana Woodward (AW).**

**JM:** Hi, Ayana! Could you please tell me about yourself?

**AW:** My name is Ayana Woodward. I am a social worker. I recently joined the Order of Social Workers here in Quebec. Maybe not recently. Like 2020, I guess. I feel like the last three years have kind of like blown by pretty quickly. So, essentially, I started my post secondary studies at McGill University, and my first Bachelor is in Political Science. I had the goal of doing the joint degree of Political Science and Law because I was into like social justice and creating change and wanting to do all those things. So, I graduated from Political

Science and with a minor in Education, and I decided to take a year off. I decided I didn't want to do anything after my Bachelor's, so that was in 2011, and that lasted for like six months, when I went to Concordia, and I completed a certificate in Family Life Education. While I was doing this, I was working for the Department of Youth Protection as an educator and also for the school board as Integration Aid, working classrooms with students with special needs or behavioral difficulties. Supporting classroom teachers in that way. Following that, Concordia came out with a graduate program for Youth Work, and I completed a graduate diploma in Youth work following my Certificate in Youth Work. So, for the following four to five years, I worked in crisis

intervention, so that was working in a residential home and there were about 8 residents at any given time, that some X amount of people that we could have hosted, and also managing a crisis line, so individuals who experience mental health challenges, suicidal thoughts, intervening in those kinds of situations in person as well as on the phone because the phone was a 24-hour crisis line. So, after doing that for five to six years – I kind of believe that working in crisis intervention has a shelf life, and my goal was really, well, when I worked for DYP, I saw a lot of kids who were experiencing mental health challenges. And so, that's why I went to the crisis center. And it's just, it's a lot, right? I think in the field of Social Work and the field of mental health, dealing with or working with and trying to support individuals who experience these challenges, it can take a toll on workers. And I don't think I was necessarily there yet, but I think I wanted to change. And so, I decided to complete a Bachelor of Social Work online with the University of Calgary. I did that in two years, so 2018 to 2020, and then the pandemic hit, I did my stage with a private practice doing counseling, and I finished in 2020 and then I applied to McGill to complete my Master's in Social Work the year after, then I graduated 2022 with my Master's in Social Work. So, along all the time while I was in school, I have always worked for the school board but used

to be in different functions. So, like I said, I started off my career as an Integration Aid and then I worked as a Social Work technician, working with students who weren't on Grad tracks, so not going to have a typical high school diploma, but would be working towards possibly going to adult education to finish their high school or going towards a vocational option basically. So, maybe doing plumbing, bakery something. So, in 2020, I got a position in the school board as a Child and Family Development Consultant, working in the Family School Support Treatment Team, and that's to help the school deal with families who are in difficult or challenging situations and support the school team, as well as support the families. And more recently, this position was created, and I gained this opportunity to hold this position in December of 2022. And so, now I am the Child and Family Development Consultant for Black families within the school board, and the goal is to help the OR help address the challenges that Black families experience within the school board's territory.

**JM:** Oh, my goodness. Wow, what a background! Thank you very much for sharing. You've done quite a bit!

**AW:** Yeah, I definitely have. Looking back, I could see like a like a path. . I could see like where everything made sense for me to have

done it. I think in doing it, it kind of maybe appears to a lot of people a little bit scattered or even to myself sometimes, but now I definitely see it all fitting together like a puzzle.

**JM:** When you were talking about the different roles that you've been like, yeah, I can see little bit of that path of how you kind of got to where you are now and speaking about now, can you tell me a little bit more about your current position?

**AW:** So, it's a very new role for the school board. It didn't exist before and, right now, I'm in the role part-time because I am still working for Youth Protection. But then I'm gonna go into it full-time in the following school year, starting in August. And so, really, one thing about the role, I think before explaining what it is, I think because it's very new, there's a lot of uncertainty, I guess, around what is the role, which I think that happens a lot with new roles that come into existence. But at the moment, I think it's about really trying to create a sense of belonging for the Black community and its members, whether that's students, staff, or their families within the school board. The educational system is not exempt from the challenges that the Black community often faces. Like the youth protection system, the judicial system, there are biases within all of these systems, and I think the school board

has taken steps or have started to take steps to address some of the things that they may not have addressed before. And so, right now, I'm really in a roll of consulting, I think in a role of building capacity within our system and to help school administrators learn how to make Black families feel welcome. Make them feel heard. To be curious, and not judgmental. To walk alongside them and to understand their realities. Because what they face in terms of challenges, in terms of access to services or just access to a certain lifestyle is quite different than another group. Whether that's a White group or whether that's somebody else who is higher on the totem pole of privilege, the realities are quite different.



**BREAK THE BIAS**

And I think sometimes, it's hard to see that. And so, having somebody I think shed the light and help them understand that the realities that they face are important, but I also am very clear that I'm not, like I said, the Black person whisperer. If I position myself, like I am a Black woman born to two parents, male and female, who immigrated to Canada from a Caribbean Island, the Caribbean, so my reality is very different than a Black person who was maybe born outside of Canada or maybe has one Black parent or both Black parents were born here. My reality is very different, and I cannot speak for everybody's reality. But what I can speak to is what I'm familiar with and how I think issues need to be addressed and taken into consideration, more compassionately and more understandingly.

**JM:** It's good to draw those boundaries at the start, too, because it is true, a lot of times, people will create roles, like the role that you're in and that you'll be full-time in, and they'll expect you to kind of be that whisperer or be that voice for everyone. But as you said, you only have your experience and that is unique and whatever you can do from there, it's whatever you can do, but you can't say like, "Oh, I know exactly what every other Black child or Black parent is facing." So yeah, it's really good to have that, for sure.

**AW:** Yeah! So, that's definitely like, even if

not doing this role in a full-time capacity right now, I could already see that becoming one of the challenges that I'm gonna have to face or even just, I don't know how to say this, but people want wanting to relieve themselves of their responsibilities because now there is this Black person who's going to be responsible for addressing challenges within the Black community, within the school board. And that's not how I envision the role to be. And I don't think anybody necessarily does or anybody really maybe sometimes wants it to come off that way, but I think when people are faced with uncomfortable situations or challenging situations or just situations that they're unfamiliar with, it's easier to pass this off to somebody else who may be a little bit more familiar with managing it. But I think it's important for everybody to put a hand in, in trying to address situations when they come up because I don't think it's fair for the Black community to only be served by their people. It's great like, I don't want it to come off as like we can't help each other, but I think in situations, in environments where the school board or in schools where I'm working, the reality is there isn't enough of us to even want to do that or to be able to do that. And I think it takes away from the onus that people should have to respect everybody to treat everybody equally to call out situations when they are wrong. And I think that's everybody's responsibility, not just the





minorities. And I think that goes back to the whole concept of Black people did not create this situation, that we're in the situation of being a minority, the situation of not experiencing the same privileges as a White male, right? We didn't create the situation and I think it's everybody's responsibility to play a part in the development of equity and equality and inclusion and fairness and kindness in the environments that they're operating within.

**JM:** I couldn't agree more with that statement. Then it comes back to allyship, too, right? So, if you expect the minorities to be doing all the work, you need to be in there, hand in hand, doing it with us because it takes a toll. It really does. It takes a toll on the mind, the body, spirituality, and a lot of different ways that it can impact, and again, as you said, it's not that you don't like to do the work, it's just when you're the only person there doing all of it, it becomes overwhelming at times. Do you see any other kind of challenges or foresee any kind of challenges other than kind of being, not necessarily the token, but kind of kind of looking at tokenism a little bit, is there anything else that you experience?

**AW:** I mean, I think I am worried about that whole token Black person issue. That's something that I am contemplating a lot about taking on this role, because of that



very issue. I've seen it in other systems where research has been done or projects have been put in place and it's like, "OK, because we discovered this, that we need to have a solution. And we're gonna have a solution, and we're gonna create this role, and this person is gonna address all the problems in this role." But there's no real work put forward in order for things to actually change, and there's just this, you know, "OK, well, we fulfilled our mandate of creating our role." I mean, that's not necessarily a challenge that I faced right now. I just think that's something that I worry about because I've seen it in other places and both on being maybe the person receiving services and also being the person in a professional role in other atmospheres where this can happen and it just being, "OK, just a check box", kind of thing. That, "we've done this and that's good enough."

So, that's not something that has happened as of yet, and it seems that people are very much excited about this role and what are the things that can be addressed through this position. But I think that it is a concern in the back of my mind, whether there's real, I guess, some muscle behind it, if that makes sense. But I think that's the reality for a lot of these roles, not only in the school board. I think it's in any role that's created to address inequality or a challenge, right? Often, people just don't know how to address it, and so it's like, "OK, let's do this and say we did it because it looks good."

**JM:** Yeah, as you said, checking it off and it's like, "Oh yeah, look at what we did. We actually did this", and it's like, "But did you?" A lot of times, it's all talk and no action. So yeah, I definitely see why you are a bit wary of that. It's like, "OK, this could happen", but it sounds like you've got some good people by your side, which is nice!



**AW:** And I think that's also something to speak to, right? There's, I am well-surrounded, more or less, by people who have similar visions of where this can go. So, I think that's really important to be well-supported. One of the reasons why I took the role is because I have a good team around me, and I think that they will be able to advocate for the changes that I think are important moving forward. I think that's, I'm verifying my allies to see if this actually possible. Like, can we actually create, change and, not necessarily like, I would love to be able to address like big picture things, but I'm also realistic that I am working within a system, a very large system and I think being able to manage my expectations and what's realistic, or the people who are above me that they can actually do is important, as well.

**JM:** And what does the team look like? So, I know about your role, but like what does everything kind of look like from that side?

**AW:** So, I work under the Student Services Department, and we're divided into like different professional groups. And so, the Student Service is the up here, and then they're like psychologists, there are speech language pathologists, there are OTs, and then there are like the FSSTT group. So, that's the group I work under. That's the Family, School Support, Treatment Team. And all of us do not have the same background within

that team. There are three branches, so there are Readaptation Officers, which essentially, we all call ourselves Child and Family Development Consultants. There are Youth Outreach Workers and there are Social Work Officers. And, for the most part, generally, we just all call ourselves consultants for child and family issues. Some of us address just family issues. Some of us address behavioral issues within the schools and system issues and how schools or teachers operate. So, we're a team and we have a different skillset and we kind of move around to different schools, depending on the needs within the school. But, for the most part, we all play a role in addressing working with families and being that link between school and family and offering different sorts of mental health support, parenting support. Like, I also run a parenting series at one of the high schools I work at and offer workshops on, like Department of Youth Protection like Workshop. So, people are more comfortable or understanding of what it means when they're calling Youth Protection or a kind of a mix of a different bunch of different educational backgrounds. So, I'm not a Social Worker at the school board, but my title of Social Work Officer, but I am a professional Social Worker and I'm part of the Order of Social Work in Quebec. Our team has become more diverse. I've only joined the team, the FSSTT team, in 2020 and, at that point, there was one other Black woman on

the team. When I joined, there was one. There are now three others. Our coordinator is a White Male and the rest of the Members, there's about maybe eight or ten of us, I think are White Women. So, last year, last school year or around like 2022-2023, two other Black Women joined the team. So, now we're a little bit more diverse. Yeah, SSD as a whole isn't that diverse, but I don't know what that speaks to. Does that speak to hiring practices? Does that speak to the fact that Black people are not applying to these roles, or they're not going into Psychology or studies for university or they're not going into Social Work? Like what? I don't know what that speaks to, but for the most part, I think the majority of people working in Student Services are White Female. I mean, and that's just for me. Like I don't, obviously, I can't speak for everybody. I don't speak for everybody, but that's just for me seeing when we have like our large department meetings and that's about 100 people, I'd say.

**JM:** That's quite a bit. It's opportunity, but it's also being able to afford schooling or maybe like the background, like maybe your parents didn't necessarily like, there's so many different things.

**AW:** I speak to this often, like when I end up with these conversations with people about the fact about how representation matters, and we want children to see themselves in

the adults around them within these professional roles. But I think also that there's the reality that, at a certain point, Black people are not afforded the luxury of being able to attend school similarly to people who are in privileged positions because of the whole concept that Black people have had to historically be able to go to school quickly and then go to work in order to make money and support families, support themselves, or for whatever amount of reasons. And oftentimes, these professional roles require you to go to school. I've, for three years, for two years, for a long, for a really long time. And they don't offer you that flexibility of being able to take classes in the evening or on the weekends or things like that. So, oftentimes, there's that issue as well, right? Where it has nothing to do with hiring practices, but more to do with access. Like, do Black people have the same access to these educational paths because of the barriers that they're faced with? Whether that be financial barriers or family responsibilities, I think that's really, that not a lot of people look for or look at.

**JM:** So, you kind of talked about the challenges. What are some of the most interesting parts of your role, in your position?

**AW:** I mean, I think I just, I'm really excited about having the opportunity to do

something for my community. I can't tell you exactly what's exciting 'cause I haven't done anything, I haven't taken on a project yet or haven't done anything that's enough to talk about. I think what's exciting is people's willingness to have these conversations right now. And their willingness to be uncomfortable and to reach out to somebody like me. Because these are not easy conversations and the times where I've had to consult about different situations, I could see the discomfort coming out and bubbling within them, and they have to sit with it. And I think people are open to it, to changing their approaches, to changing what their school looks like, even if it's as simple as having more pictures of other Black people in their school, having more outreach for Black organizations within the city. I think what's exciting is the fact that this has happened and that there is a willingness to address some of the issues and to create change and I'm excited to, I have all these projects in my head that I would love to be able to implement. Like, creating Black Student Unions in schools or creating a Black Mentorship Program. All these ideas I have in my head, but I also have to meet the people where they are and what they're ready to address. I think the first step is just acknowledging that they have Black students in their schools because they're often faced with the whole, "Why, I don't see color. Like, we try to treat everybody equally."





**JM:** The colorblind approach is not the way to go.

**AW:** No, exactly. Yeah.

**JM:** That sounds really exciting! And, as you said, just having the role and being able to start somewhere. What does the Black population kind of look like where you are?

**AW:** So, you mean like Black population in terms of like the city or like the schools?

**JM:** Both. Trying to paint the picture of Montreal.

**AW:** Montreal is a pretty multicultural city. Like, I can't give you stats. Growing up in the.

city, I grew up and I was born in Montreal and grew up in Montreal. I think like every city, there are pockets of Black communities in different areas. And I think the school board covers a large proportion of those pockets of Black communities. So, there are a lot of Black families and Black children going to schools and Lester B. Pearson and the school board and, in some places, people are surprised and where you find large populations of Black students versus where people typically think that they are. So, I think we have like a healthy population of Black students. And then I think it obviously reflects back into the schools, but I don't think people are very much aware of their populations, and I think that's something that we're going to try to bring more to the forefront is, you know, if we can get some of that data and finding out who are we serving. I think that's important. I think it's important, like how can you address the situation when you don't know who you're trying to help? So, trying to collect some data I think is gonna be some of the things that I'm gonna be doing throughout schools. If Principals can get that information through their parents and being more aware of who's in their schools, I think that's important.

**JM:** I know that you kind of talked about some of the things that you want to do, but what are your general hopes and aspirations for the role?

**AW:** Long-term, I just want Black families to feel welcomed, heard, and seen. I think there are always issues that come up. And I think when issues get really, really bad and they end up in the media, one thing that you always hear is that they did nothing. They don't understand. They don't get it, and I think I want to be able to shift that narrative a little bit just so that way, I don't think these problems are gonna go away necessarily, but I want to help them feel as if they're they've been heard, they've been understood, and their problems have been taken seriously because I don't think problems are gonna go away. But I think the way you respond to issues changes how people feel about the system that they're in or that's supposed to be serving them. So, I think bringing a little bit more compassion to the responsiveness of my colleagues I think is important, not to say that they're not compassionate, but I think from the standpoint of a parent who may be experiencing a certain challenge in the system, I think it's really important that that be at the forefront of any intervention, is to lead with compassion and to really lead from a curious standpoint of trying to understand what their reality is versus, "There are these rules and they've broken them." Like, you need to understand a little bit more about why these rules may be systemically harmful to this certain group of kids. And so, you need to be able to understand why a response that you may be seeing is what

you're seeing versus what you think is appropriate. So, I just want to increase the sense of belonging and I want kids to feel like they can they feel safe, and they can feel heard. And I say this often that there is safety in representation, and I know me wanting to have a bunch of Black professionals in this school board is maybe not a realistic goal, but I think if people, if kids can see themselves a little bit more often, whether that's through community groups coming in, whether that's through maybe an increase in Black professionals being hired or Black features being hired, that would be great. But I think there are other ways to increase representation, whether that's through teachers doing different projects in schools or different professionals doing different field trips and exposing kids to different types of people.



So, I think that's really important, and I hope that people see this role as not something that's all of a sudden gonna fix all the problems, cause it's not going to. I think it's just kind of where we're starting and we're trying to see where we're going to go with it.

**JM:** It's hard to, as you said, like systemic racism, it's a system, right? You're working within the system, which is great, because then you can kind of try to dismantle it from inside. But yeah, there's a lot more than just one thing or another that you had to kind of deal with. So yeah, but it's a starting point. That's all that matters.

**AW:** Exactly. Yeah, I'm trying to be positive.

**JM:** And that's a really good mindset to have, especially because doing any kind of consulting or advocacy work, as I mentioned earlier, can be very daunting. And it can be very lonely if you're the only person that's working. But I'm happy that you have some allies. And so, this is kind of like Psychology, I mean, mental health based, what do you do for your mental health? I know that this job or this role probably can be taxing at times, so, what do you do to kind of keep your head above water?

**AW:** Well, I have a really big family. So, that really helps. And I have a really good friend who, you know, we work in the same field

and so we mindfully vent to each other, being aware of each others' situations and whether we can actually take on each others' issues. But that's just in terms of like people around me. So, I'm well-surrounded by people I need to talk to, if I need to speak with somebody, and my coordinator is an amazing person, as well, who is very understanding and open and a good listener and not just kind of like, "Mhmm, mhmm, mhmm." But really, it helps when there are difficult situations. So, just in terms of me, I love baking. I'm not like an expert, by any means, but I can make a pretty good chocolate chip cookie! And I like baking. So, I'll bake if I feel like I'm stressed or anything, and I also enjoy working out and walking. I tried the whole like meditation thing and it's just not for me.

**JM:** It's not for everyone! So, my last question, since this is for the IGNITE Newsletter, I wanted to know if you had anything that you would like to say to the readers, in general. Do you have any kind of takeaways that you'd like for people to know about your position or any type of thing that you do?

**AW:** I think what it's important to know when working with Black families or, not only just for Psychologists, but I think it's just to be curious. Like, this has been like my main takeaway for a lot of people is to be curious. Like, to meet people from a sense of curiosity

and not inquisitiveness. I think there's a slight difference, like, I feel like being inquisitive can be nosy versus being curious comes with compassion. And I think a lot of people, a lot of Black people when they're faced with services, especially when it comes to mental health, because there's a huge stigma when it comes to addressing mental health in the Black community, I think it's lessened as years have gone by, but I think it's because people aren't understood, their situations and their reality isn't understood. And I think if you are more compassionate and more curious about where this person in front of you is coming from, I think you're gonna be able to help them a lot better than if you were to just listen because you're supposed to listen. But really, to listen with the hopes of understanding. Not to solve, not necessarily with the hope of trying to solve or fix their problems, because I think that shifts your perspective and when you try to do an intervention. I hope that was wise enough! So yeah, I mean it's a new role. My goal is to build capacity within the system, right? My goal is for people who do not look like me to be able to help people that look like me in a way that's, efficient, effective, and filled with kindness.

**JM:** Do you train other people that you work with? Or I know that you're consulting, but is there like any kind of like training aspect or?



**AW:** Well, no, there's no training aspect right now, but part of my role is to also offer professional development to my colleagues. So, whether that's Speech and Language Pathologists, Psychologists, other people in my role within the school board, it's to offer them workshops. And so, I think it's not like training, but I think it's expanding their knowledge and I think some things that Black community faces are not very well-known to the larger population. And so, I think some of the stuff that I will be doing, am required to do will be to share this knowledge with them. But also giving them a disclaimer that I am not the speaker for all Black people, but these are some of the realities that Black people face. So, no, nothing formal in terms



of training, but I think the dispensing of knowledge about the Black communities is important and even just about the Black community and the resources available to them, there's so little knowledge within the larger system about the resources available for the Black community to support themselves. There are so many resources, but I myself, I grew up going to all these resources because there's this sense of community. Like, there's this sense of belongingness when it comes to the Black community, where we don't, we it really like, they believe it takes a village, right? I was not raised only by my mother and father. I was raised by my mother, my father, my grandparents, my aunts, my uncles, and went to the Community Center on Saturday, went to church on Sunday. Like, all of these communities raised me. And I think that needs to be understood a lot better because it's not, and it shouldn't be looked at from the point of negating their responsibilities or they're not always available for the parents. There's such a wide net cast for a Black child, or they, when I grew up, I don't think I ever felt like I didn't have anybody to go to versus now, where sometimes it's frowned upon, and it's looked at it in a negative light by other people. And I think trying to like share that information, that's if this is a strength within the community, we take care of our own when we need to and there are so many people available to help and it's not just

because you read something with a Psychological lens and now, all of a sudden, you're telling me this child has attachment issues because they were sent away to go live with grandma or go live with somebody else and they have a disruptive attachment. It's like, all that literature and everything is based on a White person or studies around White people and yes, I believe in Attachment Theory and what it's meant to support, but you also need to realize that when all these studies were done, they were done with White Women, White families. That's who was studied, right? I mean, I think it's just what has been typical, right? So, when people, you know, like the example I gave, like if somebody sends their child away to go and live with grandma or aunt, it's like, "Well, Mom, doesn't have time to deal with her kids." Or if a sibling is left at home to take care of her child, her younger sibling - within reason, like I'm not talking about trying to take care of a baby or anything - there was this sense of ownership that, as the older sibling, you are responsible for your younger sibling until your parent came home and it's not, it wasn't done to parentify a child or to make them more responsible. But this is how we were raised, to take care of each other. I couldn't come back home without my younger brother or without an explanation of where he is and, like, that was my responsibility. I didn't feel like my parents didn't take their parenting responsibility. But

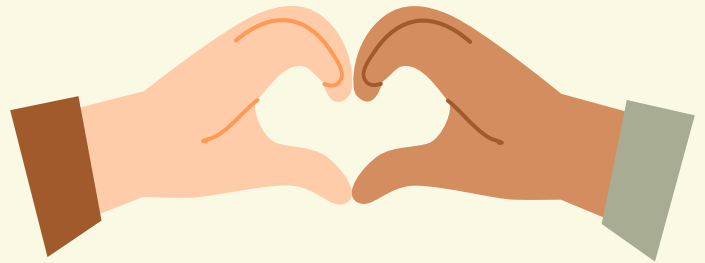


that's looked at differently, as well. You were parentified. You were made to be a parent when you shouldn't have been, right? And then you have kids who are living in two different worlds, right? They're living in the reality of what their home culture says versus what their school culture and where they're living says, so it's hard for that child to know, "Well, why are you leaving me at home with my brother? My teacher says you the parent should always be home." And then you're then you're dealing with this whole other conflict, but I think that's the reality for some Black families, is they're faced with these critiques of how they raise their child because they're coming from a non-Western approach to child rearing. And it's different and people aren't OK with it or aren't really sure what to think of it, or if it's OK because the research says that. I did a paper when I did my graduate diploma in Youth Work about the immigrant bargain, or the in-between child. So, they live two different realities, right? So, the reality of an immigrant child, the living at home with their parents and their parent's beliefs, values, systems, rules, all these things. But then having to go out into the world and navigate their host country. Well, maybe their birth country's rules, values, and expectations – those two things often don't align and are the cause of conflict and also the cause of other systems intervening in this conflict. So, the whole concept of code switching and kids doing it

and then adults doing it in their adult lives and work in order to survive being at work or to be, you know, say survive. But, you know, it's not like I mean, it could be life or death, but really about maintaining your job, maintaining relationships. And then, like the whole concept of, I don't know if this is something that I could address, but I think working, I've done workshops for the well, almost the entire school board, where we're kind of making our way in terms of informing or making reports to Youth Protection Services. And so, part of it I think is I'm addressing the over surveillance of Black children. Yeah, because I think that's a reality that Black men are over surveilled within the community. And Black children, especially Black boys, are of no exception. And I think I was reading in a paper where a young Black boy with the same behavior as maybe a young White boy is more likely to be reported to do DYP right. So, trying to get people to stop and think before they make these signal models about what they're making, why they're making it – is it really that you're concerned for their protection or do they really just need help, right? And this is what I mean when I talk about meeting them with compassion and kindness. Because if you change the lens that you're looking at this as opposed to like, "This mother isn't doing what she's supposed to do. She's doing such a bad job, or she doesn't care about her kid.", maybe Mom can only get the job that

she has and can't be home. This time, how about we try to help her figure out daycare services, try to help her figure out other resources in her community that she could send the kids after school. Not that she's negligent and she doesn't want to watch her kids, but she needs to work to provided for them because she didn't work, and she didn't have money to send them to school with food or clean clothes – that would be another reason why you would try to call. So, I think that is also where I'm trying to help, is to kind of get at the bottom of these reasons why you called you Youth Protection. It's, “You need to stop and think before you do these things, about why you're calling”, and really differentiate between them needing help versus them needing protection. I think that's really important.

**JM:** Oh, definitely and like as you said, like stopping, thinking, and addressing those unconscious biases, too.



A lot of people see different things in the media or within television shows that are not necessarily indicative of the reality that these individuals are going through. So, they're like, “Oh yeah, no, I could see this,” but it's like, “No, stop and think. Maybe there's another reason why this child's acting this way.”

**AW:** And so, those are some of the things that I'm hoping to address in this role and to improve. So, increases in the belonging. That's the goal. I think, at the end of the day, everybody just wants to feel like they're welcome and they belong. You spend the majority of your life in school, your childhood in school, right? You're doing your PhD, right? so you spend a lot of time in the system and should feel like you belong in this system and not that you're just there to pass the time or because you have to be there.

**JM:** Thank you so much, Ayana! I cannot say how much I appreciate you being willing to talk with me. Thank you for sharing your insights, how you see your role, and your aspirations!

# A Quick Glimpse of Recent Section Events

**DR. ARTHUR C. EVANS**  
CEO  
OF THE AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

*The Black Psychology Section  
of the CPA in collaboration  
with the Black, Indigenous,  
and Racialized People  
Psychology Web  
Presents:*

**DR. MAYSA AKBAR**  
CHIEF DIVERSITY  
OFFICER  
OF THE AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

**"Are We There Yet?"**

JOIN US VIRTUALLY  
MONDAY, FEB. 27TH, 2023  
12:00 - 2:00 P.M. EST

YOU MUST REGISTER TO ATTEND THIS FREE EVENT  
TO REGISTER, PLEASE VISIT:  
[HTTPS://CPA.CA/SECTIONS/BLACK-PSYCHOLOGY/](https://cpa.ca/sections/black-psychology/)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT  
BARBARAJAFRAM@BURMANU.CA

BLACK History MONTH

**Are We There Yet?**  
**Drs. Arthur C. Evans & Maysa Akbar**

**Learning & Addressing  
the Needs of Immigrants &  
Refugees**  
**Dr. Ester Cole**

*The Black Psychology Section of the CPA  
Presents:*

**Dr. Ester Cole**

**"Learning & Addressing the Needs  
of Immigrants & Refugees"**

Thursday, March 16, 2023  
12pm EST

Scan QR Code to Register for This Free  
Virtual Presentation

# A Quick Glimpse of Recent Section Events

Thank you for creating these wonderful advertisements, Barbara!

**Work & Mental Health**  
**Dr. Helen Ofosu**

Black Psychology Section,  
CPA - April Event

**Work & Mental Health**

Dr. Helen Ofosu  
Chair-Elect, Black Psychology Section

Online via Zoom

THURSDAY APRIL 20, 2023  
7 - 8 PM EDT

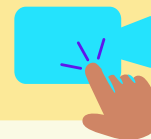
In April, the Black Psychology Section of the Canadian Psychological Association will host a presentation and Q&A. All are welcome, but registration is required.

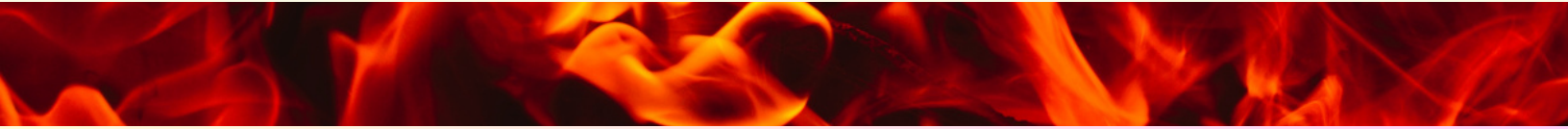
The Black Psychology Section of the CPA  
Presents:  
**Dr. Monnica Williams**

**"RACIAL JUSTICE ALLYSHIP IN INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS"**

JOIN US FOR THIS FREE VIRTUAL EVENT  
ON  
MAY 25TH, 2023 AT 12PM EDT

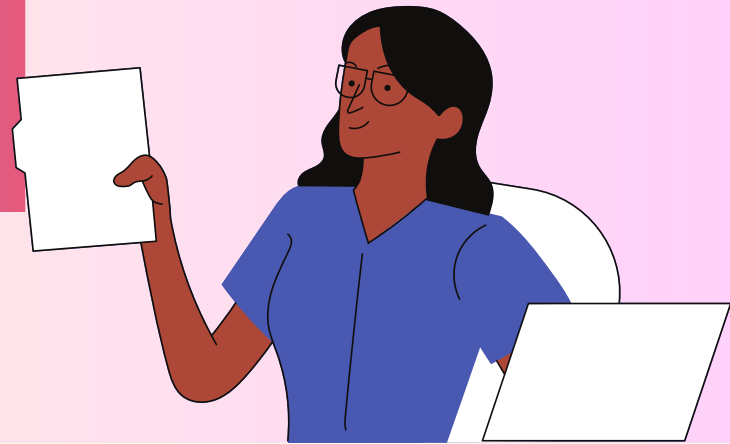
**Racial Justice Allyship**  
**in Individuals & Organizations**  
**Dr. Monnica Williams**



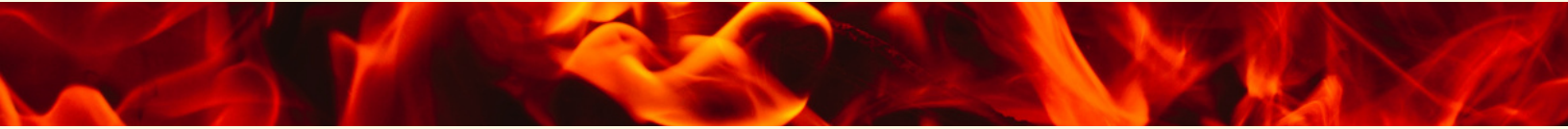


# **CPA Section Presentations**

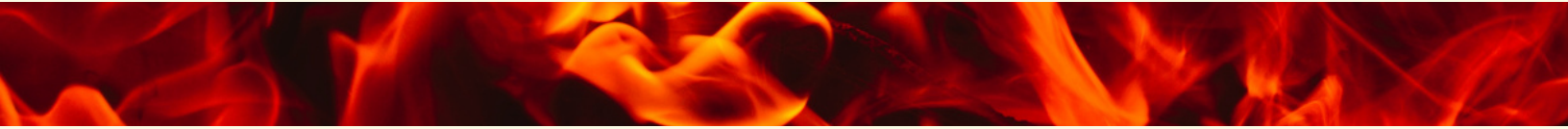
**IMPORTANT!**



<b>Presentation</b>	<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
Systemic racism in the workplace: What it looks like and how to fight it	June 23 10:00 - 11:00 am	Chestnut West (Mezzanine Level)
Deconstruction and (Genuine) Reconstruction: Analysis of Racial Power Dynamics within Canadian Professional Psychology	June 23 11:00 am - 12:00 pm	Chestnut West (Mezzanine Level)



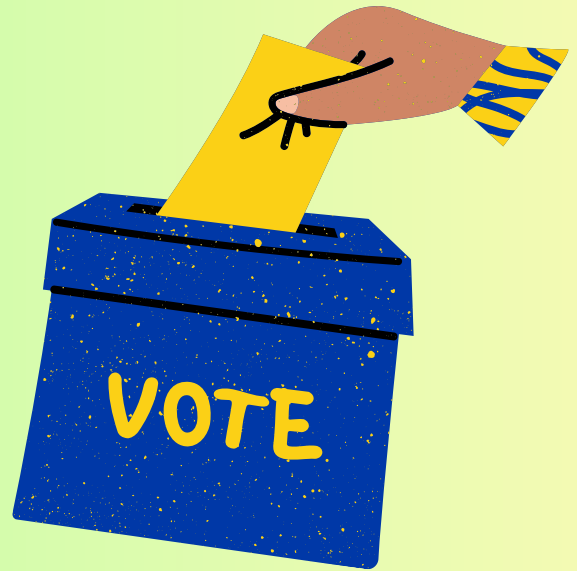
<b>Presentation</b>	<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
<p>Applying Anti-Racism Frameworks Within Clinical Psychology Training Programs: Challenges and Opportunities</p>	<p>June 23 2:00 - 2:30 pm</p>	<p>Chestnut West (Mezzanine Level)</p>
<p>Racism and Censorship in the Editorial and Peer Review Process</p>	<p>June 23 2:30 - 2:45 pm</p>	<p>Chestnut West (Mezzanine Level)</p>
<p>Where Healing Happens: African Descendants' Recommendations for Culturally Integrating African Healing Traditions And Western Psychotherapy</p>	<p>June 23 2:45 - 3:00 pm</p>	<p>Chestnut West (Mezzanine Level)</p>
<p>Psychology's role in addressing urgent problems in Canada</p>	<p>June 23 3:00 - 4:00 pm</p>	<p>Chestnut West (Mezzanine Level)</p>
<p>Section on Black Psychology Annual General Meeting (AGM)</p>	<p>June 23 4:00 - 5:00 pm</p>	<p>Chestnut West (Mezzanine Level)</p>



<b>Presentation</b>	<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
<p><b>Introducing the Wellness and Coaching Series: A Wellness Program for Black Canadian Youth Pursuing STEM Careers.</b></p>	<p><b>June 24 9:00 - 10:00 am</b></p>	<p><b>Grand Ballroom Centre/West (Lower Level)</b></p>
<p><b>Where Healing Happens: African Descendants' Recommendations for Culturally Integrating African Healing Traditions And Western Psychotherapy</b></p>	<p><b>June 24 9:00 - 10:00 am</b></p>	<p><b>Grand Ballroom Centre/West (Lower Level)</b></p>
<p><b>Obsessive-Compulsive Symptoms and Related Risk and Protective Factors in Black Individuals in Canada</b></p>	<p><b>June 24 2:00 - 3:00 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Kenora (Mezzanine Level)</b></p>
<p><b>Assessing the Effects of Black Racialization on the Personality Inventory for DSM-5 (PID-5)</b></p>	<p><b>June 24 2:00 - 3:00 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Kenora (Mezzanine Level)</b></p>



# Section Chair-Elect: Elections



## Chair-Elect Nomination Information

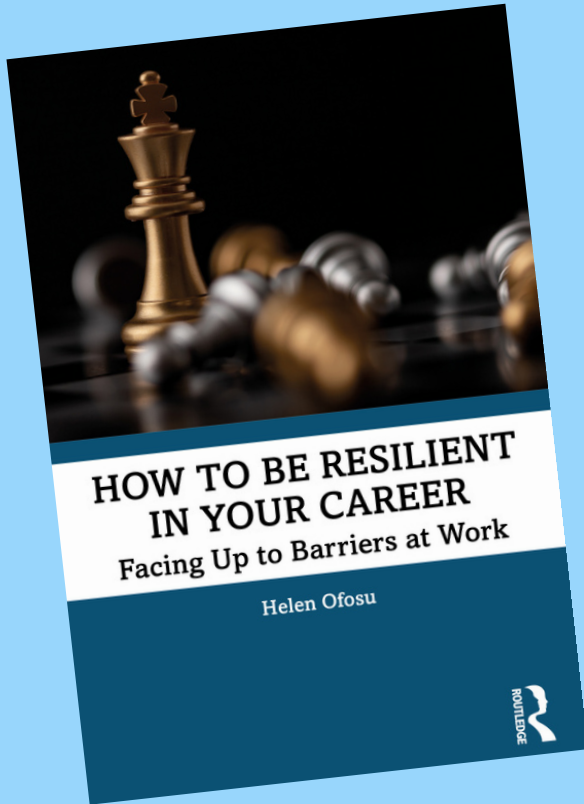
Are you a member of the Black Psychology Section of the CPA and interested in promoting Black Psychology? Do you consider yourself an advocate of Black people and find joy in helping others reach their full potential? Are you a changemaker, or would like to become one? If so, please consider joining the Black Psychology Section Executive team!

As of July 2023, our Chair-Elect position will be vacant. Please see below for the responsibilities of this position:

- The Chair-Elect will carry out duties assigned by the Chair or as requested by the Executive Committee or Section members.
- In the absence of the Chair, the Chair-Elect will preside at meetings.
- The Chair-Elect position is a 3-year commitment. The Chair-Elect will spend one year in each of the following positions: Chair-Elect, Chair, and Past Chair. *Please note that all Executive positions are only open to Section members.*

We will be holding the election during the AGM on June 23rd, 2023. In order to be elected as Chair-Elect, nominees must be present during the AGM. We will be taking nominations on the floor during the AGM.

**We are looking forward to seeing you all in Toronto!**



## **The Local Book Signing Tour Continues!** **with Dr. Helen Ofosu**

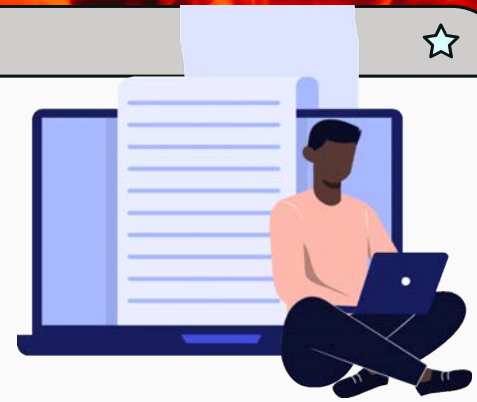
Sunday, March 26th, 2023 was quite a special day. I had my very first book signing in Ottawa at Perfect Books, and while I initially feared nobody would show up, it turned out that 30 fantastic readers came to support me!

It felt so good to meet some people who have followed my writing journey since its inception—and also make new friends.

Words cannot express how grateful and humbled I am for your presence there with me on this key milestone event!

For people based in Toronto, I'll be signing books on **Saturday, June 24**, at **A Different Booklist, 779 Bathurst St., Toronto!** I'll be there from **1:00 - 3:00 pm ET!**

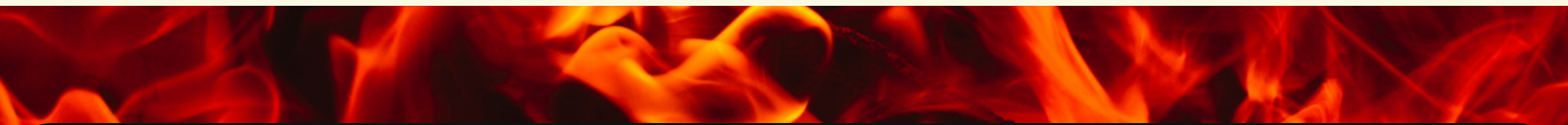
# Members' Recent Publications



## Lions at the gate: How weaponization of policy prevents people of colour from becoming professional psychologists in Canada

Faber, S. C., Williams, M. T., Metzger, I. W., MacIntyre, M. M., Strauss, D., Duniya, C. G., Sawyer, K., Cénat, J. M., & Goghari, V. M. (2023). Lions at the gate: How weaponization of policy prevents people of colour from becoming professional psychologists in Canada. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie canadienne*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cap0000352>

The purpose of this article is to shed light on how weaponized policy supports a system designed to exclude racialized individuals from becoming professional psychologists, contributing to the undersupply of mental health care providers, which in turn contributes to a mental health crisis in Canada. We first describe the origins of the current shortage and lack of diverse representation in professional psychology and conclude with a list of recommendations to dismantle historic and unjust policies. As explicit racism became more stigmatized over the decades, policy tools evolved to become more abstract and give the veneer of fairness while maintaining the original exclusionary outcome. Weaponized policies are part of a much-used but little-examined structural toolkit that serves to disenfranchise disempowered groups. We illuminate the history and adoption of these policies with examples, show how they were explicitly created to prevent people of colour from gaining power through education, and how they protect existing racist systems. The absence of historical perspective in training gives aversive policies plausible deniability, making structural change difficult. These policies have metastasized and become entrenched, persisting covertly in a multitude of policies and procedures that continue to strangle educational opportunities for people of colour and deprive Canada of diverse registered professional mental health providers and leaders.



# **Members' Recent** **Publications**

## **Complex racial trauma: Evidence, theory, assessment, and treatment**

Cénat, J. M. (2023). Complex racial trauma: Evidence, theory, assessment, and treatment. *Perspectives on Psychological Science: A journal of the Association for Psychological Science*, 18(3), 675–687. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916221120428>

Racial trauma refers to experiences related to threats, prejudices, harm, shame, humiliation, and guilt associated with various types of racial discrimination, either for direct victims or witnesses. In North American, European, and colonial zeitgeist societies, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) experience racial microaggressions and interpersonal, institutional, and systemic racism on a repetitive, constant, inevitable, and cumulative basis. Although complex trauma differs from racial trauma in its origin, the consistency of racist victimization beyond childhood, and the internalized racism associated with it, strong similarities exist. Similar to complex trauma, racial trauma surrounds the victims' life course and engenders consequences on their physical and mental health, behavior, cognition, relationships with others, self-concept, and social and economic life. There is no way to identify racial trauma other than through a life-course approach that captures the complex nature of individual, collective, historical, and intergenerational experiences of racism experienced by BIPOC communities in Western society. This article presents evidence for complex racial trauma (CoRT), a theoretical framework of CoRT, and guidelines for its assessment and treatment. Avenues for future research, intervention, and training are also presented.

# Message from the Editor

**Jennifer McWilliams**



**Hello, Section members!**

This past year has been filled to the brim with fascinating Section events and conversations! We celebrated Black History Month with multiple timely webinars, which included Drs. Arthur C. Evans and Maysa Akbar's eye-opening conversation surrounding the field of Psychology (what it looks like and hopes for the future); hosted Dr. Ester Cole's powerful talk on immigrants' and refugees' needs; and held two critically important discussions on work and mental health (Dr. Helen Ofosu) and racial justice allyship (Dr. Monnica Williams). I also had the wonderful opportunity to kick-off Black History Month with a presentation of my own, which was an exhilarating experience! Furthermore, Dr. Monnica Williams published a critically important article about how the weaponization of policies prevents People of Colour from becoming Psychologists in Canada. If you have not yet read this article, make sure to add it to your list!

I am proud of the work that this Section has done thus far, and have the deepest admiration and respect for Ms. Kafui Sawyer. I am sad that her time as Chair will be coming to an end this month, but am as equally excited to see what is on the horizon under Dr. Helen Ofosu's guidance!

I cannot wait to meet other Section members during CPA! If you would like to chat, please feel free to stop me whenever. I will be attending the Section events, and would love to talk about Black Psychology (or anything program-related - I love talking about graduate school!).

**Jennifer**



# **Section on Black Psychology: Social Media**

***Stay up to date on news, events, and discussions related to Black Psychology and the Section on Black Psychology!***



Black Psych Section of CPA (@blkpsychcpa)

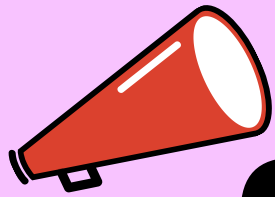


Section on Black Psychology, CPA (@BlkPsychCPA)



Black Psychology Section (CPA Website)

Questions? Please contact Barbara at [barbarajafraam@burmanu.ca](mailto:barbarajafraam@burmanu.ca)



# Call for Submissions!



NEWSLETTER

The IGNITE newsletter aims to provide readers with information on research projects and activities undertaken by Section on Black on Psychology members, books, book chapters, and published articles (e.g., peer-reviewed journal publications, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, reports), relevant announcements (e.g., upcoming conferences, webinars, thesis proposals and defences), reviews of events (e.g., conferences, webinars), and opportunities (e.g., volunteer positions, internships, research assistantships, fellowships, seeking participants for studies). We would **love** to know what members are doing to further the field of Black Psychology!

Calls for newsletter submissions will go out to members of the Section of Black Psychology twice a year, with publications following during the **Fall and Spring**.

If you would like to submit content that relates to Black Psychology for the **Fall 2023 IGNITE Newsletter**, then please send a title and summary (1000 words max.), a relevant photograph (or photographs to tell your story/animate your research), and your name to **Jennifer McWilliams** at [jsanfor1@unb.ca](mailto:jsanfor1@unb.ca).