

# Beyond Invisible: Black Youth Mental Health

## A Youth Work Teach-In

In collaboration with Donna Richards,  
Hellen Gateri, and the York Research Chair  
in Youth and Contexts of Inequity.



Thu, 6 October 2022  
9:30 AM – 1:00 PM EDT



# Agenda

**9:30AM**      **Welcome!**  
Opening Remarks | **Hellen Gateri**  
Spoken Word Performance | **The Poet MJ (Jayda Marley)**

**9:45AM**      **Opening Keynote & Facilitated Conversation:**  
*Mercy Shibemba, Unashamed & Unsupported*

**10:45AM**      **Break/Transition Time**

**10:50AM**      **Concurrent Breakout Sessions**

## **Room A: Understanding the Mental Health Experiences of Black Youth**

- **Fiona Edwards**, The Mental Health Experiences of Afro-Caribbean Canadian Youth Utilizing Mental Health Services
- **Terence D'Souza & Katelyn Wang, Young Ontarians United**, Finding the Right Frame: Building Integrated and Holistic Approaches to BIPOC Youth Mental Health

## **Room B: Surfacing the Impacts of Anti-Black Racism on Youth Mental Health**

- **Tiyondah Fante-Coleman**, Anti-Black Racism as a Determinant of Poor Access to Mental Health Supports for Black Youth in Ontario: Problems and Solutions
- **Rohan Thompson**, The Impact of Dehumanization & Racial Violence on Black Youth

## **Room C: Working to Advance Black Youth Mental Health & Wellbeing**

- **Leo Edwards**, Harnessing Cultural Humility Against Anti-Black Racism and Microaggressions in Mental Health Care
- **Chantal Phillips**, Resist the Current: Upstream Pathways to Mental Health Services for Black Youth

**11:40AM**      **Transition Time/Break**

**11:50AM**      **Closing Workshop & Facilitated Conversation:**  
**Rahma Siad-Togane & Kamau Davis-Locke, YouthREX**  
What Makes A 'Good Life'? Perspectives from Black Youth in Ontario

**12:50PM**      **Closing Remarks | Donna Richards**

**12:55PM**      **Thank You!**

# Event Information

The event is being hosted on Zoom. You will receive the link to join the live event by email.

**Live Transcription/Closed Captions:** Please note that live transcription/closed captioning will be made available in English for both the opening keynote and the closing workshop. Unfortunately, live transcription/closed captioning is not available for the concurrent workshops.

**Live French Interpretation:** Live simultaneous interpretation services will be made available in French for both the opening keynote and the closing workshop. Unfortunately, French interpretation is not available for the concurrent workshops.

**Recording:** Please note that the opening keynote and the closing workshop will be recorded and archived on YouthREX's Knowledge Hub; Q&As, discussions, and concurrent sessions will not be recorded, so no contributions from participants will be recorded and shared.

Attendees will be able to select which concurrent session to attend by entering the corresponding Breakout Room (Room A, Room B or Room C).

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## Have any questions?

If you have any questions or concerns, either leading up to or during the event, you can contact us at [info@youthrex.com](mailto:info@youthrex.com).

# Opening Keynote



## MERCY SHIBEMBA

### Unashamed & Unsupported

Mercy Shibemba is an award-winning activist, who uses her story of growing up with HIV to educate, challenge, and inspire. Mercy works on youth engagement and participation across pediatric clinical trials and research. In addition, she is co-leading the development of the £10 million 'We Move Fund', enabling Black children and young people to reach their full potential. Mercy is passionate about ensuring that the voices of young people are centered in decisions and processes that impact their lives. As a speaker and consultant, she regularly works with organizations to embed community-led practice and capacity building within their work. She is a health journalist, passionate about sharing key scientific developments with communities directly affected. Mercy is also a Non-Executive Director at **The Social Innovation Partnership**. Follow Mercy on **Twitter**.

# Opening Remarks

## HELLEN GATERI



Dr. Hellen Gateri is an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at MacEwan University in Edmonton, Alberta. Her overall research interests with immigrants and refugees focuses on health care equity and policy dimensions that centre the wellbeing and economic integration of these groups into Canadian society.

She is presently working on a funded research grant to explore the challenges social service providers encounter delivering services to immigrant communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to develop effective strategies to support service providers in the delivery of their services in the current pandemic and beyond.

Dr. Gateri has published peer reviewed journals, book chapters, and reports.

# Closing Remarks

## DONNA RICHARDS



Donna Richards is a faculty in the Social Work department at Trent University. She is also a PhD candidate at the School of Social Work, York University. She received her MSW from the University of Toronto.

Her current research explores the impact of mental health stigma on the service-seeking behaviour of young Black women (18-25 years) living with mental health concerns in Toronto. She also has extensive experience working with youth 16-29 years of age, and youth-related engagement projects within governmental, non-profit, and private practice.

Donna's research interests include youth mental health, racialized women's health, and health equity with a specific focus on the associations between intersectional forms of stigma, access to care, and health outcomes.

# Spoken Word Performer

## THE POET MJ (JAYDA MARLEY)



Jayda Marley is a 21-year-old, nationally-acclaimed Afro-Indigenous poet, youth activist, and community support worker of Ojibwe & Jamaican Descent, born and raised in Toronto. As a former competing poet, Jayda holds the 1st place National Championship title of “Voices of Today 2018.” She is the founder and creative director of her own open mic series, which first premiered in the summer of 2019, as well as the Co-Founder of the non-profit movement Not Another Black Life. She hosts her own workshop series called “BETWEEN THE LINES”, which is a space created by her to empower BIPOC Femme writers in the GTA who feel they need a space entirely crafted for them. She works diligently to create artistic and community driven spaces within Toronto, and beyond. Her overall goal is to educate and break barriers within racialized and underserved communities to help spark hope in young minds, in order for them to change the narrative and use their creativity to take part in a more revolutionary future. Follow The Poet MJ on [Instagram](#).



# Concurrent Session Presenters

Attendees will be able to select which concurrent session to attend by entering the corresponding Breakout Room (Room A, Room B or Room C).

## FIONA EDWARDS



Fiona Edwards is an Assistant Professor at MacEwan University. She is also a PhD candidate at the School of Social Work, York University. She received a Master's of Social Work from York University. Her current research explores the lived mental health experiences of Afro-Caribbean Canadian youth utilizing mental health services. Fiona's research interests include child and youth mental health, the racialization of mental illness, mental illness stigma, mental health and wellbeing, anti-oppressive social work, race, racialization, racism, anti-Black racism, religiosity, and spirituality.

### **The Mental Health Experiences of Afro-Caribbean Canadian Youth Utilizing Mental Health Services | Room A**

Research on race and mental health is more focused on the adult population. Youth mental health, in general, is an understudied area and a critical investigation of Black youth's mental health is even more limited. Moreover, the mental health experiences of Afro-Caribbean Canadian youth are not well-established within the Canadian context. Currently, a youth-centered qualitative study with Black youth in Canada is underway. By using the data from this study, I will speak to what shapes the mental health experiences of Afro-Caribbean Canadian youth and address the necessity for a decolonizing approach and an anti-Black racism framework in Black youth mental health in Canada. Recommendations are offered for working with Black youth who struggle with mental health issues.

## LEO EDWARDS



Leo D. Edwards is a Grenadian therapist, lecturer, and mental health consultant who now calls Canada home. Leo has more than 14 years of experience in the human service field.

He completed his Bachelor of Social Work from York University, Master of Social Work from the University of Toronto, and his Ph.D. in Social Justice Education from Lancaster University in the United Kingdom. Leo has since been employed in several social and educational organizations.

Leo is currently employed in a Senior Health Equity leadership portfolio at Canada's largest mental health teaching hospital and one of the world's leading research centres. Also, he has a private practice providing psychotherapy, counselling, and healing with Black and people of colour living with mental health and other life challenges. He is trained in Culturally Adapted Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CA-CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, trauma-focused therapy, and Narrative Therapy, to name a few.

### **Harnessing Cultural Humility Against Anti-Black Racism and Microaggressions in Mental Health Care | Room C**

These are challenging times for racialized people and our nation in this COVID-19 environment, which has amplified social and economic inequity. The longstanding complexities of historical oppression and contemporary sociopolitical cultural trauma experienced by the Black community can take their toll, contributing to personal challenges, including mental health concerns. The workshop is intended to provide youth workers with an understanding of cultural humility with the hope that participants would be better able to recognize their privilege and the historical role of privilege in oppressive systems. Further, participants would recognize their biases and stereotypes and how these impact reactions to microaggressions and anti-Black racism in mental health support. Practical and essential components of cultural humility will be emphasized.



## TIYONDAH FANTE-COLEMAN



Tiyondah Fante-Coleman is a Researcher at Black Health Alliance and a second-year PhD student at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health. Tiyondah completed her undergraduate degree in Health Sciences and her Master of Arts degree in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University. Tiyondah is interested in access to healthcare for Black Canadian populations, community-based participatory research, and social justice.

### **Anti-Black Racism as a Determinant of Poor Access to Mental Health Supports for Black Youth in Ontario: Problems and Solutions | Room B**

Evidence suggests that Black youth in Canada face a disproportionate amount of mental health distress compared to other Canadian youth. Anti-Black racism (ABR) and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated existing mental health challenges that Black youth face and made it more difficult for youth to access care. Though the deleterious effects of ABR are gaining mainstream attention, tangible and effective interventions to reduce its impact on mental health access are scarce. This presentation intends to elucidate how anti-Black racism weaves throughout the mental healthcare system and hinders adequate access to care for this population. Project findings are informed by social network analysis surveys disseminated to service providers and focus groups held with Black youth, community members, and mental health workers. Solutions to meaningfully address and eliminate anti-Black racism at multiple levels of society will be offered.

## CHANTAL PHILLIPS



Chantal Phillips is a fourth-year medical student at the University of Toronto, with a bachelor's degree in Psychology and Medical Science from Western University. She is passionate about addressing anti-Black racism in academic, political, and health-based contexts, and previously worked with YouthREX to help develop the *Centering Black Youth Wellbeing certificate*. In the context of mental health, her interests include bridging the gap between Black youth and primary care providers.

### **Resist the Current: Upstream Pathways to Mental Health Services for Black Youth | Room C**

This presentation aims to briefly highlight the factors that may limit Black youth's access to outpatient mental health supports and to provide recommendations for how youth and their families can increase mental health literacy, as well as how healthcare providers can advocate alongside their patients/clients to decrease barriers to upstream mental health services.

## ROHAN THOMPSON



Rohan Thompson is a licensed Social Worker/Psychotherapist with over 15 years of experience in the social work field. He provides treatment support to pre-teens, teens, adults, families, groups, and people who have experienced a motor vehicle accident. Using a range of treatment methods, Rohan utilizes a trauma-informed, client-centered, strengths-based approach that will help you live optimally, increase resilience, and enhance coping skills. Whether it is anger, anxiety, depression, guilt, shame, loss/grief, Rohan is able to provide support that helps you navigate challenging times in your life.

Rohan holds two degrees from Wilfrid Laurier University, including his Masters in Social Work. In his spare time, Rohan is also passionate about the sport of football and has been a youth football coach for over 13 years. Rohan is also a board member of a not-for-profit in the GTA. Most importantly, Rohan is happily married and devoted to his marriage and family.

### **The Impact of Dehumanization and Racial Violence on Black Youth | Room B**

This workshop will explain dehumanization, the adultification of Black youth, and racial trauma. The workshop will also discuss the impact of racial violence on Black youth and identify systemic and individual interventions to help mitigate the impact of anti-Black racism and racial violence on Black youth.

## TERENCE D'SOUZA & KATELYN WANG, YOUNG ONTARIANS UNITED



**Young Ontarians United** is a non-partisan youth-led research organization dedicated to amplifying young voices and lived experiences in Ontario. **Terence D'Souza** and **Katelyn Wang** are the co-founders of Young Ontarians United. Terence is a systems thinker based in the GTA and passionate about how young Canadians can meaningfully engage in and transform democracy. He serves as a board member for Apathy is Boring, an organization that supports youth to be active citizens in Canada's democracy, and is a member of the global ChangemakerXchange Community.

He is currently pursuing his undergraduate degree in Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Ottawa. Katelyn is a first-year medical student at the University of Ottawa, and previously studied at the University of Toronto, as a National Scholar. In March 2021, she represented Canadian youth at the 65th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women on the Young Diplomats of Canada Delegation. Passionate about accessible and culturally-safe healthcare, education, and youth empowerment, she is excited to continue her community work as she studies medicine.

### Finding the Right Frame: Building Integrated and Holistic Approaches to BIPOC Youth Mental Health | Room A

In 2021, Young Ontarians United released *Hopeful Resilience: The Impacts of COVID-19 on Young Ontarians*, a report summarizing the findings of their research with over 500 youth from across Ontario. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) youth were disproportionately impacted, across all institutions and facets of life, which uniquely compounded the mental health crisis for Black youth. If we recognize that the different systems that discriminate are in fact interdependent, and that they are quite vigorous in their oppressive practices, then we can also recognize that interdependent solution-building, integrated approaches to addressing BIPOC youth's mental health challenges, and a holistic vision of the BIPOC youth experience – from facing ignorance in school classrooms to hearing microaggressions in the workplace – is the path forward. This session will highlight the critical need for a reimagined system to address BIPOC youth wellbeing that unites and overlaps services, builds more partnerships in the youth sector, and increases awareness of support.

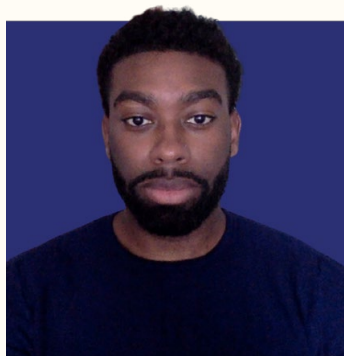
# Closing Workshop

## RAHMA SIAD-TOGANE



Rahma is a PhD candidate at York University's School of Social Work. Her research examines surveillance and policing within public housing communities. Her areas of interest include neighborhoods and housing, urban poverty/income polarization, youth development, social policy, race and policing, resiliency, and community surveillance. Rahma has also worked in the non-profit sector for 14 years in youth engagement and settlement services for racialized newcomer Canadians, with a focus on Black women's health and wellbeing.

## KAMAU DAVIS-LOCKE



Kamau is the Learn & Research Associate at YouthREX. He studied Criminology and Sociology at Douglas College. He also spent time as a research assistant for the Toronto Youth Forum, "Project Groundings: Youth and Community Development in Canada and Jamaica". Kamau has interests in combatting racial and social inequities and exploring innovative methods of assisting marginalized communities. Outside of work, his interests include spending time with his family, working out, reading novels, and cooking (but not well).

### What Makes A 'Good Life'? Perspectives from Black Youth in Ontario

YouthREX's **Ontario Youth Sector Compass** research project focuses on understanding the experiences of young people and youth workers in Ontario. As part of this project, from November 2021 to January 2022, YouthREX conducted an online survey of over 3,000 youth across the province to capture the youth voices of Ontario. This presentation explores the responses from Black youth: how they define a 'good life', what they perceive as barriers to a 'good life', and the changes that need to happen in Ontario for them to have a 'good life'. Ultimately, our preliminary analysis of Black youth's perspectives highlights how issues of mental health pervade many aspects of their daily lives – including housing, financial stability, and careers – as well as their self-worth, relationships, and networks.



# Thank you for joining us!

For more resources on Black youth mental health, visit our **Knowledge Hub** →

**OUR VISION** is an Ontario where shared knowledge is transformed into positive impact for all youth!

**OUR MISSION** is to make research evidence and evaluation practices accessible and relevant to Ontario's grassroots youth sector through knowledge exchange, capacity building and evaluation leadership!

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