



# CIARS newsletter

## Message from the Director

*George J. Sefa Dei, Director of CIARS*



### CIARS 2020 Decolonizing Conference Update

The CIARS internal planning committee was diligently monitoring the developments of COVID-19. After careful consideration, the internal planning committee has decided to postpone the upcoming 2020 Decolonizing Conference until the fall of 2021.

We thank you for your time, thoughtfulness and consideration. We are grateful to everyone who has submitted an abstract or a session plan, shared the conference information or volunteered in the preliminary preparations of this biennial event. We look forward to collaborating with and learning from you.

During these painful and difficult times, the work of the Centre for Integrative Anti-Racism Studies (CIARS) that brings together faculty, students, community workers, and organizations whose intellectual interests and political commitments are in anti-racism, anti-Black racism, critical race studies, Indigeneity, and decolonization is very poignant. But, how do we engage in critical dialogues that transcend intellectual discussions into political activism for meaningful change? How can we ensure that the legitimate voices of pain, anger, and suffering are not in vain?

We all have differential responsibilities to bear and roles to play. Current conversations about continuing anti-Black racism within society seems to have registered in our consciousness more so than ever. Why has the murder of George Floyd laid bare the historic struggles of Black, racialized and Indigenous peoples for social justice? We must have broader conversations that go beyond police brutality and police systemic culture, conversations that include schools, courts, media, health, employment, transportation and housing. The confluence of Black suffering, rage and resistance cannot be dismissed through simple intellectual exercises. The pervasive culture of denialism must end. We must demand action.

Our society has a short attention span on matters of systemic racism and other injustices. We need to hold not only political, intellectual, and community leaders accountable, but also hold each other accountable to do what is right and just. There is a deep colonial wound that needs healing and restoration. To resist, we must acknowledge the structures of colonial power upon which our institutions have been built and continue to be sustained.

Amid our collective pain, the culture of silence, and the silencing of courage, we must be bold to speak out clearly and without ambiguity. We must contest and design different and counter futures. We must continue to speak up for as long as we can breathe and hope that we will be heard in ways that acknowledge our mutual and collective complexities and responsibilities. We are witnesses to history as it unfolds. As many others have noted, history has its way of righting past wrongs. History can also be unforgiven. History, no matter how long it takes to unfold, will always be harsh and unkind to injustice and oppression. Let us all work together to make this moment a sea of change. We owe it to ourselves, the younger generations and the generations to come.

# RECAP: CIARS TOWNHALLS

by Sanjana Singh



CIARS recently hosted a series of Town Hall webinars to discuss the recent uprising surrounding anti-Black racism, health and racialization, police brutality, and the impacts of COVID-19 on Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities. The inaugural Town Hall, “Rising up During COVID-19: Solidarity, Anti-Black Racism and Health”, took place Wednesday, July 15. Moderated by Ezi Odzor, former CIARS Coordinator, along with an esteemed panel including Dr. Onye Nnorom, Cheryl Prescod, Paul Taylor, Kathy Lewis, and Olivia Chow. These critical conversations reflected many of the concerns people have surrounding COVID-19, such as the lack of race-based data and its impact on the social determinants of health of Black, Indigenous and racialized communities. Cheryl Prescod notably stated, “racism is a greater pandemic than COVID-19”. Kathy Lewis connected systemic racism and the impacts of COVID-19 by stating, “Where you live determines where you go to school, and determines your quality of life, access to fresh food, ability to exercise.” During the Town Hall, CIARS released a series of polls on Twitter. 94% of respondents stated they were “unsatisfied” with their Mayor and city’s efforts to address systemic inequalities for racialized populations during the pandemic. Olivia Chow expressed if our “leaders aren’t doing what we need them to do, [we need to] replace them!”.

The second installment of the Town Hall series, “Resistance, Healing and Recovery: Reclaiming Hope and New Futures” which took place on July 30, discussed how we must continue the conversation and think about healing and recovery through critical friendship, and radical-solidarity. Moderated by Marycarmen Lara Villanueva, CIARS coordinator, with an incredible group of panelists Leticia Ama Deawuo, Diane Hill, Dr. Pamela Palmater, Chris Ramsaroop, Dr. Roberta Timothy, and Dr. Francisco Villegas. The panelists discussed the importance of solidarity building surrounding the convergences of anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, and migrant justice. The conversations emphasized the importance of solidarity and expressed that through shared experiences of racism and injustices, Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities can work in solidarity with each other and fight for one another. Moreover, the conversations shed light on how rage and anger play a vital role in resistance and healing. As such, Dr. Roberta Timothy stated “Resistance is about hope and transformation that deconstructs norms from white elite classes - hope is what carries us through, it is our connection to our elders and through our rage.” Dr. Pamela Palmater agreed with this and stated “we need to be okay with being angry, destructive and accept in the history of the earth nothing has come without conflict, resistance, resurgence”. When asked in a poll, how hopeful people were that in light of recent national movements, the government would take steps to address systemic racism in Canada. Evidentially, 63% of respondents answered they were “not hopeful” about this. Please find the recordings of the Town Hall series [link here](#) and we encourage the use of these conversations as a resource.

## COMING SOON CIARS in Conversation

CIARS is excited to launch a monthly CIARS in Conversation series in September! This series will feature local and international scholars, researchers, Elders, community leaders, artists, community activists, students, and educators that will participate in a virtual educational conversation. These conversations will critically explore a plethora of topics, theories, and concepts that surround the theme of anti-Black racism and anti-racism. Some of the topics includes Anti-Black Racism in Schooling and Beyond, Islamophobia to Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism, Black and Indigenous Solidarity, Defunding the Police, Beyond Brown Solidarity, Black Feminisms and much more! We are thrilled and inspired to launch this series and cannot wait for all of the teachings. We hope you join us for these critical conversations! Follow us on our [social media](#) accounts and check out our [website](#) to stay up to date on the CIARS in Conversation series.

## COVID-19 Updates

Toronto, Peel and Windsor-Essex entered Stage 3 on the 31st of July.

### What does this mean?

Businesses and activities such as dine-in restaurants, bars, fitness centres, theatres, casinos, team sports and live event venues can resume operations under Stage 3. However, they must do so safely and risk being fined if they break physical distancing and public health regulations

It is now mandatory for everyone, with some exceptions, to wear a face mask or face covering in all public indoor areas in Ontario. The face mask must cover your nose, mouth and chin.

As cities across the country move into Stage 3, CIARS is critical about how the reopening of non-essential businesses continues to impact the health and wellbeing of Black, Indigenous and Racialized communities.



As much as anti-racist work is a process and at times a frustrating process, according to Lewis, it is also a rewarding one. For Lewis, the best reward is to see her students regaining their humanity and working towards building hope of self-recognition and validation. Her practice provides students with more than simply learning the mechanics of reading, writing, and memorizing, but with learning in a meaningful way. She builds and cultivates hope by providing students with opportunities to learn about their histories so that they can deconstruct and challenge systems of oppression. Ultimately, students engage critically with their communities and build enough inner safety to have a conversation about their own experiences. Undoubtedly, Kathy Lewis's teaching builds contexts that allow hope to flourish beyond classrooms.

## I CAN'T BREATHE....IN MEMORY OF GEORGE FLOYD

By Michelle Mae Sutherland

I can't breathe!  
Mama...Please help me!  
Hands behind my back.  
Lying on the street.

I can't breathe!  
I am going to die.  
My stomach hurts.  
Mama.....Please help me!  
I am face down on the street.

I can't breathe!  
Three Policemen are on my back.  
My hands are in cuffs behind my back.  
I am being attacked.  
The pressure is too much on my back.  
The Policemen knees are on my back.

I can't breathe!  
Mama.....Please help me!  
The Policeman knee is on my neck.

I am pinned beside a car.... in fear for my life.  
Please hear my cry.

I can't breathe!  
I am lying on the ground.  
I am going to die.  
Please man!..... Please help me!

"Get Up", "Get Up", cries the Cop.

I can't get up man!  
My stomach hurts!  
I am going to die!  
I can't breathe!  
Mama...My breath is gone...!

## Community Spotlight: Kathy Lewis

By Sevgi Arslan

This month we would like to highlight the work and dedication of Kathy Lewis, an educator who is passionate about equity and social justice. She is committed to tearing down systemic barriers that cast shadows on student's potential. While Kathy recognizes and embraces the history of all people, Lewis's recent work focuses on a pedagogy that centres African and Indigenous history and knowledge.

As a curriculum leader for Equity, Student Engagement and Achievement at Scarborough Centre for Alternative Studies, Lewis collaborates with other educators to co-create content including events and activities that build cultural pride and affirms students lived-experience and lived-reality in support of Black student empowerment, leadership, and achievement. In addition, she is the co-founder of Revealing Magazine, the first Black digital magazine available in Apple and Android Play Store, which showcases Black excellence and challenges stereotypes and myths that marginalize Black communities. She believes that these activities and events are designed to supplement student's learning, the consciousness of history, and validation of self and provide the language and tools so that students can unpack from their experiences and showcase their skills.

## Community Events (Online)

### Worker Arts & Heritage Centre & the Hamilton & District Labour Council Black Canadians' Contributions to Labour

Thu, Aug 6, 2020 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM EST

### National Association of Women Business Owners Women and Racial Justice

Fri, Aug 7, 2020 1:30 PM - 3:30 PM EST

### SPARK Kindness

#### Kids, Race, and Racism: Where to Start

Tue, Aug 11, 2020 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM EST

### For Youth Initiative Celebration

Thu, Aug 13, 2020 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM EST

### Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion Webinar: Cultural Competence

Thu, Aug 20, 2020 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM EST

### Columbia Oral History MA Program

#### Talking White: An Anti-Oppression View towards Transcribing Black Narrators

Sat, Aug 22, 2020 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM EST

## UPCOMING DEADLINES

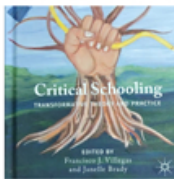
### UofT Work Study

Application period begins August 17, 2020 and closes September 24, 2020

The Journal of School Leadership is currently accepting submissions

The Downview Advocate is currently looking for volunteer contributors

## Book Launches!



Critical Schooling: Transformative Theory and Practice by **Francisco J. Villegas & Janelle Brady**



Black Racialization and Resistance at an Elite University by **rosalind hampton**

## Community Updates

In June, a petition was signed with close to 15,000 signatures requesting that **Dundas Street** be renamed due to its anti-Black racist past. On Tuesday, 21st July, a briefing note was released containing 4 options for this renaming request. A full report that will fully assess all four options will be brought forward by the City Manager on the 23 September, 2020.

Children's Aid Societies in Ontario have been requested to stop issuing birth alerts by mid-October. This was ordered by Ontario Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues Jill Dunlop on July 14th.

On July 6th, the provincial government announced that Ontario will work towards destreaming high schools. This will begin with Grade 9 math classes next fall.

Historic moment in Ontario education as three Black women now lead school boards: Carlene Jackson took over as interim director of the TDSB, Colleen Russell-Rawlins will take over as interim director of the Peel board and Camille Williams-Taylor was appointed to the Ottawa-Carleton School Board.

*Think there's an update we should feature for our September issue? Email us at [ciars.oise@utoronto.ca](mailto:ciars.oise@utoronto.ca)!*

# What has the CIARS Team been up to?

*George J. Sefa Dei, Director, of CIARS*

Share's "[Open Letter to the Community](#)"

The Ghanaian News Vol. 24 No. 6 June 2020 "[Letter to the Ghanaian/ African Community](#)"

Interviewed by Angelina King: "[Ten of Thousands sign Ryerson student's petition calling for mandatory high school course on race](#)"

*Janelle Brady, Senior Coordinator of CIARS*

Moderator for the [OISE Black Faculty Conversation](#)

Panelist on Ask CDI: [Discussing racism with children with Shawnee Hardware and Annette Walker](#)

Interviewed by Farah Nasser on [Global News](#) about how parents can talk to kids about standing up to racism

Panelist on [Women Excellence: The Journey to Success and Walking in your Purpose](#)

*Marycarmen Lara Villanueva, Coordinator of CIARS*

Panelist on [Charla Sobre El Racismo Por Zoom a conversation on talking to children about racism with Matias de Dovitiis and Prof. Alexandra Arraiza Matute](#)

Moderator on [Resistance, Healing and Recovery: Reclaiming Hope and New Futures](#)

*Suleyman Demi*

Postdoctoral Research: 2020 -2021 Exploring the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Food Security Status and Wellbeing of the Black Communities TAIBU Serves

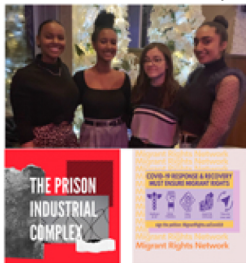
## CIARS Internal Committee & Volunteers

The CIARS Internal Committee alongside a very dedicated group of volunteers have been working hard to grow our social media platforms. You can now find Anti-racism themed posts, resources, important events and a chance to connect with us on all our social media! Please give us a follow! *If you are interested in volunteering with CIARS, please drop us an email!*



## The Rights Project

launched by CIARS Volunteers, Sanjana & Muna



**The Rights Project** is a new initiative based in Toronto. Their goal is to empower and educate Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities in the GTA about their rights as well as to provide communities with the tools to confidently advocate for themselves. They hope that through education and collaborative discussions, communities will feel empowered to challenge historically oppressive institutions and defend one another's human rights.

Founders of The Rights Project: Muna Nur, Sumaya Nur, Kyla Platsis and Sanjana Singh. **Instagram: [the\\_rights\\_project](#). Twitter: [TheRightsProj](#).** *Want us to feature your Instagram page? Send us a message with your page on Instagram at [@OISECIARS](#)*

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