



Conference Summary Report

“Confronting Racism and Addressing Human Rights in a Pandemic”

September 16, 2020

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic is a human rights crisis in Canada and around the world. The segments of society most vulnerable to racism, hate, and discrimination as well as exclusion are also the ones most negatively impacted by the pandemic. Racialized communities and Indigenous peoples, as well as religious minorities, are among the most affected due to the enduring legacy and ongoing effects of colonialism, discrimination and systemic racism. Without a deliberate human rights-based approach and an anti-racist ethical lens, crisis response and post-pandemic recovery measures will continue to exacerbate existing inequalities and endanger lives across the country.

On September 16 2020, the Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat (Federal Secretariat) joined forces with the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) to host a virtual event that convened advocates and experts from across disciplines to raise awareness about the disproportionate negative impact of COVID-19 on racialized and Indigenous peoples and religious minorities in Canada. Invited speakers offered provocative perspectives to challenge participants to envision a truly inclusive, human rights-informed post pandemic recovery process. This report presents their conclusions and recommendations.

CEREMONY AND OPENING REMARKS

Elder Claudette Commanda, professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Ottawa, offered an opening prayer to acknowledge the ancestors of this land and to welcome all participants on the Homeland of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people. Thanking Elder Commanda, Chief Commissioner of the CHRC, Marie-Claude Landry, provided opening remarks, highlighting the severity and pervasiveness of racism in Canada. She reminded the audience that “these challenges are not just an American issue,” and that “meaningful action must be rooted in ongoing listening and ongoing learning.” Final opening words were offered by Peter Flegel, Executive Director of the Federal Secretariat, who expressed concern at the recent incidents of hate targeting Asian Canadians in relation to the pandemic, as well as the rise of islamophobia in Canada. He contended that stakeholders across the country were pointing at the critical need for an anti-racism lens to inform government action as Canada faces the challenges of the pandemic.

OPENING KEYNOTES:

“VISIONING: ENVISIONING AN EQUITABLE AND PROSPEROUS RECOVERY FOR ALL”

WES HALL

Wes Hall, established innovator, entrepreneur, and philanthropist, spoke as first keynote. He introduced his discussion with a video on the BlackNorth Initiative, a corporate-driven enterprise aiming “to end anti-Black systemic racism throughout all aspects of our lives by utilizing a business first mindset.”¹ Mr. Hall explained how the recent indignation caused by the death of George Floyd prompted him to gather business leaders around the issue of Black representation within Canadian boardrooms and executive levels. Heads of corporations who have pledged to participate in the BlackNorth Initiative acknowledge the prevalence of anti-Black racism, its impact on Canada’s Black citizens, and the need to create opportunities within companies for Black people.² Mr. Hall shared data from the 2019 survey “Race Relations in Canada,” conducted by Environics, which suggest the existence of a gap between racism experienced by Black Canadians, and the denial of non-Black Canadians with regard to this experience.³ The presentation focused on four key areas of systemic racism:

- 1. Job Opportunities and Income Support**
Data suggest a reduced likelihood of Black Canadians succeeding in the job hiring process, as well as impaired career progression and lower levels of integration for Black employees.⁴
- 2. Health and Community Services**
Data suggest inferior access to physical and mental healthcare for the Black population in comparison to other groups,⁵ a problem reflected in the COVID-19 pandemic, when Black and other racialized communities are hit the hardest.⁶ Data also suggests that Black women are particularly affected by different forms of inequities.⁷
- 3. Children and Youth Development**
Data suggest lower educational achievement for Black students in schools.⁸
- 4. Police Services**
Data suggest over-policing and racial profiling of Black people. In Toronto, Black communities perceive significant bias in policing.⁹

Mr. Hall emphasized Canada’s advantage with regard to cultural diversity, arguing that it could be a competitive benefit, especially at the time when we need “the best minds possible after COVID-19 to help with the recovery of our economy.” If Canada is able to overcome its systemic racism problem, “people will come to Canada because of that competitive advantage.”

LARRY ROUSSEAU

Larry Rousseau, Canadian Labour Congress Executive Vice-President, highlighted the contribution of essential workers to the pandemic: “healthcare workers, the grocery store workers, the cleaners, the jobs that are most often performed by women and racialized women particularly.” Some wage inequities are still affecting racialized minorities in the labour force, notwithstanding some abuses committed by employers in the context of the pandemic, notably the refusal to grant sick leave to public health workers. Furthermore, Mr. Rousseau stated the importance for the labour movement of applying intersectional models to support all equity groups, through the collection of more disaggregated data. In this context, unions have launched a campaign to move Canadians forward by advocating for better employment, better healthcare, improved social services, and affordable housing.¹⁰

GINA WILSON

Gina Wilson is Algonquin and began her career in her First Nations community as executive director of health and social services, after which she occupied different positions with the Correctional Service of Canada and Public Safety Canada. She was appointed Deputy Minister for Women and Gender Equality in 2017, for Public Safety in 2019, and for Diversity and Inclusion, and Youth in 2020. Ms. Wilson began her presentation by acknowledging missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, “because this issue in Canada is the very core of pure and outright racism in this country.” Following this premise, she presented her views on reconciliation and healing, prompting public servants to realize they are not immune to systemic racism, and to take action both at the departmental and individual levels. Some notable initiatives undertaken by the Federal Secretariat include the COVID-19 taskforce, representing 25 federal departments and agencies, as well as a series of virtual town halls held with various equity-seeking groups to share recommendations with the 25 departments and agencies. Going forward, contended Ms. Wilson, the Government will have to work towards a better integration of the gender equity lens within its everyday practices.

PANEL:

“WHAT WILL CANADIAN SOCIETY LOOK LIKE POST-PANDEMIC?”

Dr. Kathy Hogarth, Associate Professor at the School of Social Work of the University of Waterloo, moderated the discussion focussing on a series of questions presented to the panel, composed of the following participants:

- **Alex Neve** has been a member of Amnesty International since 1985 and served as Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada, English Branch, between 2000 and 2020.
- **Diane Brisebois** is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Retail Council of Canada since 1995.
- **Dr. Josephine Wong** is a Professor at the Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing at Ryerson University, focusing on urban health to emphasize the historical and structural violence, systemic racism, and other forms of oppression that result in preventable social and health disparities.
- **Marjorie Villefranche** is Executive Director of Maison d’Haïti, a community institution devoted to the education and integration of immigrant families in Montreal.
- **Sheila Block** is a Senior Economist and a public commentator with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

HOW SIMILAR OR DIFFERENT DO YOU THINK THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LANDSCAPE WILL LOOK IN CANADA POST-PANDEMIC? WHAT MUST WE DO DIFFERENTLY?

Sheila Block reminded participants how the beginning of the pandemic was marked with the belief that it would serve as an equalizer, both from the health and economic perspectives. In fact, experiences are divided and have even been exacerbated by the crisis; some workers have been able to work from home, resulting in economic gains, while many low-wage and essential workers are facing loss of employment and job instability, in addition to putting their health and that of their families at risk. These challenges have particularly affected women and racialized communities. While intervention by governments at all levels has been essential to support families and maintain services, disengagement from government would result in an exacerbation of inequalities.

Diane Brisebois contended that the retail and service sectors have been and will continue to be affected by the crisis. We have witnessed many bankruptcies, as well as shifts in business models. Thousands of jobs have been lost, with profound economic and social impact on our country. These challenges have exacerbated already significant changes to the industry, notably by the shift toward online shopping, as well as new technologies that are replacing some of the labour force. This was crucial to the conference's discussion because retail is often a portal to the job market, where many new Canadians, young people, and racialized Canadians gain early work experience, allowing them to grow an economic profile.

HOW HAVE CERTAIN LEGISLATION IMPLEMENTED DURING THE PANDEMIC DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED COMMUNITIES?

Alex Neve argued that from the start of the pandemic, restrictions and laws have had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, something that Amnesty International Canada has widely documented. In fact, the crisis is only making visible "long-standing, obvious, deeply entrenched vulnerabilities which are grounded in racism, in sexism, poverty and inequality." Three categories of legislation are of special concern:

- The disproportionate impact of the restrictions regarding isolation; quarantine; lockdown; and physical distancing obligations on the elderly, on women in the workplace and in the domestic realm, and on migrant workers.
- The disproportionate impact on how these restrictions are being policed; there is no doubt that Black, Indigenous and racialized people are targeted.
- The border closure impacts on immigrants and refugee claimants who wish to come to Canada from the United States.

Marjorie Villefranche argued that the legislation itself is an expression of systemic racism, since it does not take into account some challenges that immigrant families may face in following the regulations, namely those who live in close quarters with large, multigenerational families. Moreover, quarantine did not protect essential workers and caregivers, including an overwhelming proportion of women and racialized people.

HOW DO YOU SEE HUMAN RIGHTS, ANTI-RACISM, AND EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS SHAPING THE RECOVERY AHEAD?

Alex Neve considered that these movements have to go much further than simply shaping the recovery ahead: it should be a moment of transformation at the national and global levels, beginning with truly embracing human rights. More specifically, it has to be about anti-racism, embracing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, applying a feminist approach, and considering these issues through an intersectional lens.

Marjorie Villefranche linked the impact of COVID-19 on racialized communities to social determinants of health, and prompted participants to consider the centrality of systemic racism in this process and to seek specific actions to mitigate this phenomenon.

Sheila Block brought an economic perspective to the discussion, explaining that we cannot move to economic recovery unless we address the economic inequality that was only exacerbated by the pandemic. For instance, the Roosevelt Institute has published a report arguing that centring “whiteness in [...] politics and policymaking fails all people, American’s economic potential, and the COVID-19 recovery.”¹¹

WHAT SHOULD GOVERNMENTS DO TO MITIGATE THESE INEQUITIES MOVING FORWARD? WHY DID THEY NOT TAKE ACTION AFTER THE EXPERIENCE OF SARS?

Dr. Josephine Wong prompted participants to think of the pandemic beyond the current event, but also to consider it in relation to the past. While the SARS outbreak left governments better equipped to treat COVID 19 as a biomedical disease, the systemic racism exacerbated during SARS was forgotten. Many Asian Canadians experienced racism in relation to the pandemic again this year, and some equity-seeking groups are more affected than others. This is a reminder that while resources allocated to mitigate the virus are distributed equally among all Canadians, the pandemic does not affect every group equally. Inversely, since the disease is a threat to all Canadians, individuals with precarious immigration status or low healthcare coverage can, for the first time, access better services. Dr. Wong pleads participants to question, “What kind of world do we want to live in? What policies are we going to do that will work better?”

WHAT WILL BE THE LASTING MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC?

While mental health affects everyone during the pandemic, **Dr. Wong** argued that people who are more privileged and affluent have less to worry about, and therefore, less likely to suffer mental health issues. Racism plays a part in this scheme, and Asian communities have been devastated by the violence being directed at them. Moreover, some people are left behind in the healthcare system, notably: the elderly who cannot access information as easily; people with existing mental health challenges; and racialized people who feel marginalized from access to services. Another challenge is experienced by people who cannot physically isolate or who live in close quarters with their families, notably those working in nursing homes and long-term care institutions, which might be causing feelings of guilt and distress. Overall, racialized communities are suffering a heavier mental burden caused by the pandemic, and the recovery will require a collective effort based on love and kindness.

DID THE MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING OF AN ESSENTIAL WORKER CHANGE BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC?

Diane Brisebois contended that the crisis has elevated the conversation about the minimum wage and living wage by making everyone appreciative of frontline workers, regardless of the sector. The only way to address this properly is for the employers to work closely with policymakers across the provinces and territories to avoid a political or economic discussion creating dissension. Echoing the comments made by other panellists on the racism experienced by racialized communities, Ms. Brisebois related that some of the racialized members of the Retail Council of Canada have dealt with serious harassment in the past few months.

Marjorie Villefranche shifted the discussion to the meaning of essential workers, which has expanded since the beginning of the pandemic. While health and first responders were usually considered essential workers, this category now includes workers in the food industry, in cleaning, or in daycares, for instance. While many were safe in confinement, these essential workers, comprising a majority of racialized and immigrant Canadians, as well as many asylum seekers, were risking their health. In short, essential services were coloured during the pandemic.

According to **Alex Neve**, the crisis has shown the vulnerability of individuals with precarious immigration statuses, leading to human rights violations because of their difficulty to access employment protections and healthcare. Secondly, the crisis has made the role of individuals with precarious immigration statuses in the economy and society clear to everyone. Therefore, access to regularization of status needs to be broadened for migrants.

WHAT ARE THE CONCRETE WAYS TO MOVE FORWARD AS WE THINK ABOUT STRENGTHENING OUR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS?

Sheila Block reinforced the idea that governments should consider legislation that will raise labour rights, notably concerning sick leave, the definition of employee, overtime, etc. Furthermore, workers should be able to count on the enforcement of active legislation.

Dr. Josephine Wong suggested that beyond asking for government reform, we should invite the Canadian public to challenge the status quo—on housing and childcare, for instance. Grassroots policy movements should be a crucial element in the change process.

Diane Brisebois suggested that governments use an equity lens when designing relief programs that give generously to business organizations.

Alex Neve contended that Canada should finally embrace the fact that economic and social rights are human rights, should address a long-standing disaggregated data gap, and should adapt its engagements to a more equitable policy design.

Marjorie Villefranche agreed that while a lot of work has to be done at the policy level, we should think about the reinforcement of community and grassroots organizations, which are so vulnerable in the context of the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Peter Flegel thanked keynotes and panellists for an enlightening discussion, explaining the unique role of the Federal Secretariat within the Government of Canada. With a mandate to monitor the impact of legislation on marginalized communities, the Secretariat strives to ensure that all departments are applying anti-racist criteria to their mandates and program delivery. The Secretariat is also engaged in a dialogue with grassroots organizations to promote this cause. **Marie-Claude Landry** concluded the session, urging everyone to continue this crucial dialogue and to take action as agents of change. She urged participants to keep listening and learning, to keep insisting on meaningful data, to keep pushing for concrete action, to keep educating our leaders, and to keep galvanizing a younger generation of bright minds.

ENDNOTE

¹<https://blacknorth.ca/>

²<https://blacknorth.ca/the-pledge/>

³<https://www.environmentalinstitute.org/projects/project-details/race-relations-in-canada-2019>

⁴Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, July 2020; Conference Board of Canada, April 2017; University of Toronto: Whiteness and Resume: Race and Safe-Preservation in the Labor Market 2016, The Star 2016: "Jobseekers resort to 'resume whitening' to get a foot in the door, study shows"; BCG CCF Diversity and Inclusion Survey Data 2019, n=5085; Ryerson University's Diversity Institute, Corporate Knights, Globe and Mail 2020: "Why are there still so few Black lawyers on Bay Street?", BCG Analysis;

⁵Temporal trends in cardiovascular disease risk factors among white, South Asian, Chinese and Black groups in Ontario, Canada, 2001 to 2012: a population-based study; Black Health Alliance, Health Inequities; Why Black Women are More Likely to Die of Breast Cancer, 2016; Racialization and Health Inequities in Toronto, 2013

⁶Toronto Public Health

⁷StatsCan, Primary Health Care Providers, 2017; Every Woman Matters, A Report on Accessing Primary Health Care for Black Women and Women of Colour in Ontario; BCG analysis

⁸<http://onabse.org/YCEC-TDSBFactSheet1.pdf>

⁹<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2019/05/29/black-and-indigenous-people-less-likely-to-trust-toronto-police-survey-finds.html>

¹⁰<https://canadianlabour.ca/canadas-unions-have-a-plan-to-move-us-forward/>

¹¹<https://rooseveltinstitute.org/2020/09/15/black-women-best-how-to-build-an-equitable-economy/>

ANNEX: BIOGRAPHIES

WES HALL, EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, KINGSDALE ADVISORS

Wes Hall is an established innovator, entrepreneur, and philanthropist. As Executive Chairman & Founder of Kingsdale Advisors, he has been named one of Canada's most powerful business people. He is also the owner of QM Environmental, a leading environmental and industrial services provider; and Titan Supply, a top manufacturer and distributor of rigging and wear products serving industries in the oil, construction and transportation sector; and Harbor Club hotel, Curio Collection by Hilton, one of St. Lucia's premier resorts.

In 2009, Wes was recognized with the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year award for Ontario, Canada and, in 2011, received the designation ICD.D from the Institute of Corporate Directors' (ICD) in partnership with the Rotman School of Management of the University of Toronto. In 2020, Wes was appointed to the Ontario government's Capital Markets Modernization Taskforce, a five-person advisory group of experts tasked to review and modernize the province's capital market regulations.

Wes is also known for generosity, leveraging his business success to benefit others with a number of impactful charitable initiatives. He is Founder and Chairman of the Canadian Council of Business Leaders Against Anti-Black Systemic Racism and the BlackNorth Initiative, committed to the removal of anti-Black systemic barriers negatively affecting the lives of Black Canadians.

He is also a director of SickKids Foundation and a board member of Pathways to Education and Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). Wes has also changed the lives of thousands of children in the Caribbean, donating both his money and time. In 2015, Wes was the recipient of the Vice Chancellor's Award and in 2017 received an honorary doctorate, both from the University of the West Indies.

GINA WILSON, DEPUTY MINISTER OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AND YOUTH

Gina Wilson is Algonquin and began her career in her First Nation community of Kitigan-Zibi as Executive Director of Health and Social Services and as Director of the Wanaki Treatment Centre. Ms. Wilson was a Senior Manager with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) when she joined the Federal Government in 1996 and for five years served as Director General, Aboriginal Affairs at Correctional Service Canada.

Ms. Wilson was appointed in 2006 as Assistant Deputy Minister with Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada, then Assistant Deputy Minister of Emergency Management and Regional Operations at Public Safety Canada in 2011-2013. In 2014, she became Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Treaties and Aboriginal Government at Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

Ms. Wilson was then appointed as Associate Deputy Minister at Employment and Social Development Canada in March. From 2015 to 2017, she was Associate Deputy Minister of Public Safety Canada. Ms. Wilson was appointed as Deputy Minister for Women and Gender Equality on May 23, 2017, where she led the creation of the new department and worked toward ensuring that GBA+ became fully instituted in government.

In 2019, Gina was appointed as Deputy Minister, Public Safety Canada and returned to the Department for the third time.

In January 2020, Gina assumes a leadership role on government-wide initiatives related to youth, LGBTQ2, anti-racism, multiculturalism and indigenous knowledge. She supports Canadian Heritage as a Senior Associate Deputy Minister while also focusing on her role as Deputy Minister, Diversity and Inclusion and Youth.

Gina plays an important leadership role as Deputy Minister Champion of Federal Indigenous employees and is the recipient of the 2020 Inspire Award for lifelong leadership and lifelong work on Indigenous issues and supporting Indigenous employees.

LARRY ROUSSEAU, EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT, CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS

Larry Rousseau was elected as CLC Executive Vice-President at the CLC's 28th Constitutional Convention in May 2017. Previously, he served as the Regional Executive Vice-President of the Public Service Alliance of Canada's National Capital Region, and as the Regional Vice-President of PSAC's Union of National Employees.

Larry's first experience in the labour movement (and his most meaningful in his opinion) was when he was hired as a filing and stockroom clerk in the mail room of the Canadian Labour Congress at the age of 18. Shortly thereafter, he was elected shop steward for the Office and Professional Employees International Union Local 225 (now COPE).

He was subsequently hired at Statistics Canada, to which he remains committed to this day. He has a Certificate in Civil Law from the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law, Civil Law Section, and a Masters Degree in Public Administration from the École nationale d'administration publique in Quebec.

Larry has a long history of trade union and political activism, particularly on issues like labour relations, health and safety, human rights, and equity. His involvement in the LGBTQ2SI, anti-racism and peace movements has been an integral part of his engagement and commitment to social justice.

SHEILA BLOCK, SENIOR ECONOMIST, CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Sheila Block is a senior economist and a public commentator with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Sheila's research specializes in Canada's labour market, public finance, and inequality. She is the co-author of the Colour-coded series of papers with Professor Grace Edward Galabuzi. Sheila has an Honours B.A. in Economics from the University of British Columbia and a Master's degree in Economics from the University of Toronto.

DR. KATHY HOGARTH, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

Dr. Kathy Hogarth is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work, whose primary areas of research, service and teaching are on critical race, racism and equity in Canada and international contexts.

In addition to her university portfolio, Dr. Hogarth serves as the Vice President of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education and the President of the North American and Caribbean Association of Schools of Social Work. She is an equity and race consultant, speaker, and trainer. One of her more recent publications is a book titled "A Space for Race: Decoding Racism, Multiculturalism, and Post-colonialism in the Quest for Belonging in Canada and Beyond."

ALEX NEVE, SECRETARY GENERAL OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, ENGLISH BRANCH

Alex Neve believes in a world in which the human rights of all people are protected. He has been a member of Amnesty International since 1985 and has served as Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada's English Branch since 2000. In that role he has carried out numerous human rights research missions throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America, and closer to home to such locations as Grassy Narrows First Nation in NW Ontario and to Guantánamo Bay. He speaks to audiences across the country about a wide range of human rights issues, appears regularly before parliamentary committees and UN bodies, and is a frequent commentator in the media.

Alex is a lawyer, with an LLB from Dalhousie University and a Master's Degree in International Human Rights Law from the University of Essex. He has served as a member of the Immigration and Refugee Board, taught at Osgoode Hall Law School and the University of Ottawa, been affiliated with York University's Centre for Refugee Studies, and worked as a refugee lawyer in private practice and in a community legal aid clinic. He is on the Board of Directors of Partnership Africa Canada, the Canadian Centre for International Justice and the Centre for Law and Democracy. Alex has been named an Officer of the Order of Canada and a Trudeau Foundation Mentor. He is a recipient of a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. He has received honorary Doctorate of Law degrees from St. Thomas University, the University of Waterloo and the University of New Brunswick.

DIANE BRISEBOIS, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, RETAIL COUNCIL OF CANADA

Diane J. Brisebois is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Retail Council of Canada (RCC) and has held that position since 1995. Prior to joining RCC, Diane held the position of President and CEO of the Canadian Office Products Association for 14 years. Diane has spent more than 38 years leading retail industry associations in Canada.

Retail Council is the largest retail association in the country representing more than 45,000 retail establishments of all shapes and sizes from coast to coast. RCC's membership covers all retail segments including general merchandise, grocery and pharmacy and accounts for more than 70% of all retail sales in the country excluding auto and gas sales.

DR. JOSEPHINE WONG, PROFESSOR AT THE DAPHNE COCKWELL SCHOOL OF NURSING AT RYERSON UNIVERSITY

Josephine Pui-Hing Wong has extensive experience in critical public health and urban health, including the development of public health access and equity policies and inclusive practice frameworks. She holds the positions of Professor and Research Chair in Urban Health in the Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing–Faculty of Community Services at Ryerson University. Her teaching focuses on community health nursing and people-centred urban health promotion, with an emphasis on making visible historical and current structural violence, systemic racism, and other oppressions that result in preventable social and health disparities. In addition to her assigned teaching, she collaborates with community partners to establish community-campus critical learning circles that bring together community members, service providers, and students to engage in critical dialogue, knowledge exchange and collaborative writing.

Josephine's program of research is underpinned by the principles of social justice and equity. She is committed to doing research "with" and not "for" the affected communities. She seeks to answer the "so what" and "what then" questions in all her research. Being mindful of the need and urgency to go beyond understanding specific phenomena about health inequities, she works closely with the affected communities to develop socially innovative solutions that promote collective resilience and social change. Her areas of research include: social identities and health practices; HIV, sexual health, and mental health in diasporic and transnational communities. She has led and is leading numerous intervention studies on stigma reduction and mental health promotion in the Asian, Black and Latino communities in Canada as well as among university students in China. Currently, she is leading a rapid response research, funded by New Frontiers in Research Fund, to mitigate the negative psychosocial impacts of the COVID19 pandemic on marginalized communities in Toronto.

MARJORIE VILLEFRANCHE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MAISON D'HAÏTI

Marjorie Villefranche is Executive Director of Maison d'Haïti. She is at the forefront of current events through her involvement in the fight against racism and discrimination. Her energy in advancing the issues of immigrant women and undocumented migrants is unfailing. A specialist in the history of the Haitian community, in 2014 she participated in the Histoires d'immigrations project led by UQAM and Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.

Since 2017, she is also a part-time member of the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec, for the youth mandate.

She has been honoured with several awards, including: Bâtisseuse de la cité 2017; Personality of the Week, La Presse and Radio-Canada, in 2012; Woman of Distinction, Education category, YWCA Foundation, 2008.