

# NEW PATHWAYS OF EMPOWERMENT AND TRANSFORMATION: MOVING THE DIAL ON RACE, CLASS AND JUSTICE STRATEGIES

*How do we build movements capable of generating the power to compel governments and corporations to curtail their violence?"*

—Angela Y. Davis, *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture*

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Friday, Nov. 6, 2020

Opening Remarks: Gwendolyn VanSant

Board Welcome: Ari Cameron with Dr. Emily Williams Development Committee

Speakers: Mayor Kamal Johnson

United States Attorney Deepika Shukla

State Senator Hinds

NAACP- Berkshire President Dennis Powell

Keynote: Keynote: Greg Watson

Musical Artist: Andre Henry (closing)

Panel 1 - Nov. 6th

*Radical Civics and Civil Anarchy*

Moderator: Gwendolyn VanSant

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*"Anyway I don't think we can rely on governments, regardless of who is in power, to do the work that only mass movements can do."*

—Angela Y. Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*

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Relevant and necessary conversations on civil disobedience, structural racism in America and civic engagement are often designated as “difficult” or “uncomfortable.” Panelists **Helen Hinginbotham, MBA (When Women Gather)** and **Dr. Leticia Haynes (Williams**

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**College**) join keynote speaker **Greg Watson (Schumacher Center for New Economics and founding Executive Director of Dudley St. Initiative in Roxbury, MA)** in challenging us to push past comfort zones, familiar structures and explore the importance of engaging and hosting these discussions in order to catalyze change, forge new pathways and partnerships and move the dial strategically to reclaim a vision of liberation and justice. **Andre Henry** rejoins this New Pathways panel to speak to us about radical organizing for Black Lives and to share an original musical selection.

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*"Radical simply means "grasping things at the root."  
— Angela Davis*

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## **Panel 2 - Nov. 7th**

***Wellness & Positive Mindsets for Transformation, Healing & Justice***

**Moderator: Aseante Renee**

**Keynote: Gibran Rivera**

Shifting our approaches to masculinity, organizational cultures, healing modalities, and interpersonal relationships moves us toward transformation, healing, and justice. **Leah Abel & Ayla Gavins, CircusUP (Liberation Health)** will share their experience working with leadership and staff to build racial justice and equity into organizations and team culture through an approach that incorporates foundational workshops, training, coaching and facilitated dialogues. **Dr. Keeley Verret, Holistic Eye Care (Generational Health)** shifts the paradigm in symptom-based healing to understand the unique health challenges in our community, and to approach healing body, mind and spirit from a root-cause perspective. **Dr. Eden-Reneé Hayes, Williams College (Compassionate Inclusion)** asks, if we generally have positive intentions in the way we treat each other, how do these intentions factor in as we interact and unintentionally offend each other? How can we be welcoming in our proactive efforts towards inclusive spaces and interactions? Dr. Hayes will invite us to be vulnerable and go deeper in our inclusive conversations, and attendees will leave with practical takeaways.

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*Everyone is familiar with the slogan "The personal is political" -- not only that what we experience on a personal level has profound political implications, but that our interior lives, our emotional lives are very much informed by ideology. We often times do the work of the state in and through our interior lives. What we often assume belongs most intimately to ourselves and to our emotional life has been produced elsewhere and has been recruited to do the work of racism and repression."*  
— Angela Y. Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*

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## **Panel 3 - Nov. 7th**

***"Where do we go from here?: A mid COVID moment to reimagine HBCUs?"***

**Moderators: Dr. Sharon Honore, PhD, University of the Virgin Islands VI & Dr. Emily Williams, University Of Pittsburgh with special guest, Dr. Shirley Edgerton, ROPE**

Panelists **Catherine Adams (Claflin University), Charmayne E. Patterson, PhD (Clark Atlanta University), and Eva Michelle Wheeler, JD, PhD (Oakwood College)**--three Black women and professors at three different institutions--examine the current state of the mid-pandemic HBCU, where increased workloads, furloughs and pay cuts, COVID-19 concerns, and the increasingly more visible pandemic of state-sanctioned violence against Black people converge in a single setting. This unprecedented situation, with its extensive rippling effects, has amplified institutional issues and concerns that already existed in the HBCU setting, prompting the two-pronged question of, "Who do we want to be and where do we go from here?" We can use this double pandemic to strengthen cultural ways of knowing, discuss dismantling systems of oppression, build intersectional empathy, and practice radical self-care. Audience: All

## **Panel 4 - Nov. 7th**

***Global Perspectives in Race, Class and Justice***

**Moderator: Dr. Frances Jones-Sneed (MCLA and CCR)**

This conversation among scholars emphasizes global perspectives on racial and economic justice. **Dr. Chenzira Davis-Kahina (University of Virgin Islands)** presents transcultural analyses of socioeconomic and geopolitical realities and select research of social justice,

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human rights, and freedoms of Native Indigenous Ancestral AfRaKans (NIAA) of the Virgin Islands of the United States (VI-US) through interdisciplinary frameworks. Assessing restorative and reparatory justice approaches, Dr. Davis-Kahina brings clarity and critical vision to present challenges (institutional and malicious disruptions to Freedom, Justice, and Sovereignty (FJS) of people of AfRaKan ancestry in the VI-US and globally amplified by systemic racism, disaster capitalism, civil unrest, COVID19 pandemic, colonialism, enslavement trauma, and domestic and international terrorism), as well as solutions and examples of resilience for reestablishing sovereign power, liberating social justice, self-determination, and harmonious social governance. **Dorjiss Wellington (American University)** posits that all leaders tire physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, and mentally, trying to negotiate the best paths to lift the spirit of humanity while combating the forces that fight against change. When trying to heal and overhaul systems that have been in place for decades without insights about how to heal those who govern, there is a risk that leaders can become slaves to those same systems—robotically carrying out orders and demands. The work of **Dr. BioDun J. Ogundayo (University Of Pittsburgh)** offers a re-imagining of Blackness across the world.

## **Panel 5 - Nov. 7th**

### ***Mental Health and Social Justice***

**Moderator: Louis Forouhar-Graff**

**Panelists: Louis Forouhar-Graff, MD** (Charlotte Hungerford Hospital), **Starlin Astacio, LMFT** (Charlotte Hungerford Hospital - co leader of Diversity Equity and Inclusion council), **Jane Tillman, PhD** (Director of Erickson institute and psychologist at Austen Riggs Center), **Kimesha Harris, LCSW** (Institute of Living Young), **Aieyat Zalzal, PhD** (Psychologist at Institute of Living Young)

Each panelist will share information from their conceptual or therapeutic lens, and discuss how this provides a framework for thinking about resilience and wellness in the context of social justice work.

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—Angela Y. Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*

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## **Panel 6 - Nov. 8th**

### ***Diversity and Anti-Racism Best Practices and Applications***

**Moderator: Aseante Renee**

Diversity and Anti-racism best practices from leaders in the fields of education, law, and workplace consulting. From their respective areas of expertise, each panelist will discuss how they build strong foundations for anti-racism work. **Dr. Tracey Benson, Tracey Benson Consulting (Anti-Racism Institute for Educators)** introduces the purpose, goals, content, and intended outcomes of the Anti-Racism Leadership Institute, as well as guidance on how to apply and register for the institute. **Jonathan Andrew Perez, Esq. (Justiceology-by-Design)** seeks to affect “culture change” among criminal law practitioners, academics, and civil rights advocates through a renewed focused on structural inequity, a broader and more interdisciplinary understanding of how a cultural history of systemic inequity has translated to disparate educational, economic, and housing sustainability outcomes. The work is even more urgent in the current public pandemic when vulnerable neighborhoods, which have been disproportionately impacted by the virus, cannot risk further disruption by a high rate of imprisonment that would amplify the collateral consequences. “Justiceology” teaches law, literature, and critical race history through a study from the Settlement through Slavery, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Era, The New Deal, and the contemporary social environment of COVID-19 on systemic inequity. **Dana Brownlee (Workplace Antiracism Advocate)** knows that clarifying basic terms and issues is a critical first step for anyone seeking to learn more about what it means to be “antiracist.” What is racism really – is it individual or systemic? Can Black people be racist? Are bias and racism the same thing? What’s the difference between being “nonracist” and “antiracist”? If you disagree with racism, are you automatically “antiracist”? We will define key terms, distinguish confusing concepts and answer common questions. **Samantha Calamari (Microsoft)** joins us to share strategies on Inclusive Instructional Design.

## **Panel 7 - Nov. 8th**

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**Hic Rosa panel with Dr. Abbas "*Keeping Freedom in View: Community, Justice, Political Education, and the Question of Power*"**

**Moderator: Dr. Asma Abbas**

**Panelists: Brianna Pope (Three Point Strategies), Dr. Nadine Naber, PhD (University of Illinois at Chicago), Ejeris Dixon (Vision Change Win Consulting), Heidi Andrea Restrepo Rhodes, MA (CUNY Graduate Center)**

In these times, as we are asked to continue to mend our lives and protect our communities, and to stand against tides of history with grace and dignity, struggles for justice often become so attached to our bodies and beings and their survival, that our capacities and humanities that exceed the frameworks of the urgent and immediate problems to be solved start to wane, ceding all creative and emancipatory energy to those who insist that we continue to fight the same fights. Our histories tell us that freedom and justice were always tied to each other; what is the cause of this amnesia – the injustice of being written out of our own freedoms, because we were asking for justice? The panelists, hailing from spaces of the academy, social justice organising, political activism, and cultural work, often with long interstitial histories in between these spaces, have been invited to interpret the prompt in the title of the panel, centring their own work and commitments, and to comment on how transformative work and healing can remain entwined in what Dr. Davis has called “the constant struggle” that it freedom, against all the adversities and challenges of these times. The panel is organised by the Hic Rosa Collective and Falsework School, as part of our commitments to alternative political and aesthetic education, cultural production, and community building as essential frontiers of the struggle for freedom and justice for all.

**Panel 8 - Nov. 8th**

**“Arts for Justice”**

**Moderator: Gwendolyn VanSant**

How does art re-imagine freedom while shattering the myths of history? Artists and scholars take up this question with a look at how we address history, envision

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liberty/liberation, tell Black stories, and invoke change through visual and performing arts. **Dr. Nanci Wellington Bookhart (Paine College)** focuses her research on art's ability to reformulate humanity as a community of equals in the beautiful object. Drawing on Friedrich Schiller's "Sixth Letter" in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* and Jacques Ranciere's theory of the distribution of the sensible and the regimes of art, Dr. Wellington Bookhart proposes the reconstitution of historical fragments through art, or more properly, aesthetics. Performing artists **Dawn Meredith Simmons (Front Porch Arts Collective and Stage Source)** & **Pascale Danice Florestal (Front Porch Arts Collective)** prioritize Black stories being told through theatre arts in their work through the Front Porch Arts Collective in Boston. Berkshire-based artist **Pops Peterson** debuted *Reinventing Rockwell*, a series of artworks reimagining mid-century illustrations by Norman Rockwell in a manner reflective of today's times. Celebrating America's rich diversity and embracing Rockwell's sense of humanity, Peterson has created images that envision social change and express his desire for a positive, inclusive, and just world. These works are a major feature in the current "imagining Freedom" exhibition at The Norman Rockwell Museum. Lyricist and producer **Jackson Whalan** raps and freestyles with intelligent lyricism and makes beats with influences of 90s boom bap hip-hop, jazz, electronic, and pop music, to invoke positive societal change.

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*"Progressive art can assist people to learn not only about the objective forces at work in the society in which they live, but also about the intense social character of their interior lives. Ultimately, it can propel people toward social emancipation."*

—Angela Davis

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## Panel 9 - Nov. 8th

*"Moving the Dial on Race, Class and Justice Strategies? How will you show up in the world?"*

**Keynote: Dr. Angela Davis, "Moving the Dial: How much has changed...the 70s to the present?"**

**Moderators: Dr. Emily Williams, Aseante Renee**

**Panelists: Tracy Gray (The 22), Paloma McGregor (Angela's Pulse/Dancing While Black), Gwendolyn VanSant (BRIDGE CEO & Change Consultant)**

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**Musical guest: Mikahla Iverson in honor of Dr. Davis**

In this very special New Pathways session, political activist, philosopher, academic, and author **Dr. Angela Davis** will share her perspective on race, class, and justice strategies from the 70s to the present. How does the history of struggle illuminate the contemporary movement, and, with this in view, how will we show up in the world in the 21st Century to “move the dial toward liberation and abolition?”

Following Dr. Davis’s presentation, panelists will join Dr. Davis and share some of the innovations and strategies they are bringing to social justice work in the fields of organizing and advocacy, movement arts, and social impact work. **Tracy Gray (the 22 Fund and We are Enough)** challenges us to systematically and unapologetically dismantle structural barriers and create a new paradigm for financial access for women working towards innovation. **Paloma McGregor (Angela’s Pulse)** invites us to embody justice and anti-racism work with attention to care and expression. **Gwendolyn VanSant (BRIDGE and Changemaker Strategies)** urges us to see, understand and ultimately make use of the interconnectivity of the world, our broader community, as a mosaic of power, humanity and influence through holistic vistas.

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*“The roots of sexism and homophobia are found in the same economic and political institutions that serve as the foundation of racism in this country and, more often than not, the same extremist circles that inflict violence on people of color are responsible for the eruptions of violence inspired by sexist and homophobic biases. Our political activism must clearly manifest our understanding of these connections.”*

— Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Culture, and Politics*

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## **Closing Remarks**

**Moderator: Gwendolyn VanSant**

**Opening Remarks: Donna Haghighat (Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts) and Erika Allison (Willow Investment for Loving Change)** join us to encourage thought and action towards financial equity & inclusion which is at the foundation of survival and



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thriving in our current US system of politics and humanity. From these talks the speakers invite you to imagine the stepping stones to your own radical paradigm shift to create access for women and Black and Brown communities.

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*"I believe profoundly in the possibilities of democracy, but democracy needs to be emancipated from capitalism. As long as we inhabit a capitalist democracy, a future of racial equality, gender equality, economic equality will elude us."*

— Angela Y. Davis

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**Keynote: Malia Lazu, "Tomorrow: A Catalyst Conversation for Sustainable Impact"**

**Panel 10 - Nov. 9th**

**Moderator: Malia Lazu (Urban Labs and MIT Sloan)**

Our New Pathways Social Justice conference closes out with a focus on the future. We will hear from change leaders who are shifting culture and opening up new paths toward a sustainable tomorrow. **Malia Lazu (Urban Labs and MIT Sloan)** discusses her extensive experience generating wealth for communities by expanding access to capital and spurring economic growth —especially in communities of color that have traditionally been left behind. Executive Director of the Black Economic Council of Massachusetts **Segun Idowu, (BECMA)** highlights how “out-of-the-box” approaches to advocacy and organizing can build an inclusive economy. **Anasa Troutman, (President/CEO of the Big We)** builds & executes strategies for artists & organizations that are aligned with her vision of a loving world & her belief in creativity as a pathway to personal, community & global transformation. Troutman will talk about how her innovative work shapes narratives and transforms culture. **Jonathan Lewis, (The Gathering for Justice)** is a Social Cohesion Practitioner and Trainer who will speak to the importance of centering cultural equity from his perspective in the field of conflict resolution and reconciliation.

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*“The challenge of the twenty-first century is not to demand equal opportunity to participate in the machinery of oppression . Rather, it is to identify and dismantle those structures in which racism continues to be embedded.”*

*—Angela Y. Davis, Abolition Democracy: Beyond Prisons, Torture, and Empire*