

Radical Collaboration(s) for a Better World:
*Reckonings, (R)evolutions, Life and Love... Towards the
Elimination of All Forms of Inequalities*

*International Women's Day Annual
Conference, Feminist Legal Studies and the
Faculty of Law Queen's University
Kingston Ont., March 10-11, 2023*

CALL FOR PAPER and PANEL PROPOSALS

Feminist Legal Studies Queen's is calling for individual paper proposals and for complete panel proposals for presentation at its annual International Women's Day (IWD) conference on March 10-11, 2023. The FLSQ conference incorporates the United Nation's International Women's Day 2023 theme, "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality" which according to UN Women aligns with the priority theme of the 67th Session of the Status of Women, focused on "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls."

The conference theme captures in its call a range of issues from significantly addressing women's gender and equality rights, anti-Black racism and discrimination, to the coercive and discriminatory force (or alternatively emancipating promises) of law; the role of the welfare state; regulatory governance of the earth and its resources; the climate crisis and implications for food security, global health and wellbeing; the precarity and limits of rights; migration; sex, race, and religious segregation; religious freedom; and the role of peoples, culture, and communication in collective and individual action and agency in polities, toward the eradication of all forms of inequalities within and among countries.

The pandemic has disparately impacted Indigenous, racialized, marginalized, and impoverished women and girls, exposing the most vulnerable in our societies to greater risks of job and food insecurity, greater burdens of unpaid work and care, fewer shares of resources available, and heightened burdens of personal and institutionalized violence. Such inequalities are compounded by existing and renewed political risks that grossly intrude on civil liberties, bodily security, expressive and personal freedom, individual and collective health and wellbeing, as well as social, economic, and cultural rights; new sites of exclusion of gendered, racialized, and differently abled bodies, women in the body politic and in spaces of coercive control, including in political, institutional, and social bodies, have emerged to amplify harms of oppression within and across nation-states.

According to the UN, the pandemic has caused the first rise in between country income inequality in a generation; 2021 was the deadliest year for migrants since 2017 and one in five people have experienced discrimination on at least one of the grounds prohibited under international human rights law.

As Dr. Debra Thompson reflects in her book, *The Long Road Home: On Blackness and Belonging*, we are reminded that freedom and violence, even in established polities of liberal democracies, are experienced as differently as the democracies themselves, based on contextualized identity politics and colonial legacies.

We are delighted to have **Dr. Debra Thompson**, Canada Research Chair in Racial Inequality in Democratic Societies, Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science at McGill University, and the Queen's University Principal's Development Fund Visitor, delivering the keynote lecture, "**Roots, Routes, and Reckonings: On Blackness and Belonging in North America**".

Her highly acclaimed memoir navigates her life's journey, confronted with anti-Black racism, individualized, systemic, and institutionalized, across the United States and Canada and at the borders, reflecting on freedom, mobility, migration, and movement as a Black woman belonging to the African diaspora, an academic and scholar, and descendant of Rebecca and Cornelius Thompson, Black US refugees of slavery who escaped to Canada. Professor Thompson writes about life, opening her book with a quote from Dionne Brand that "[y]ou don't write about racism, you write about life...It is life you must insist on", while examining homegrown violence baked into anti-Black racism across jurisdictions, thoughtfully raising the complexities of "belonging", "home", and "return". Etched into collective memory and consciousness is the video documenting George Floyd's murder in 2020, followed by mass protests and Black Lives Matter movements and marches around the world, revitalizing unresolved pre-existing struggles in the US of systemic anti-Black racism for a nation built on slavery, with all its entailments of violence (including sexualized), torture, persecution, exclusion, and extraction. Her book meditates on these and how political economies have been built on violence and secured by discriminatory legal instruments, the ubiquity and "durability" of racism in all aspects of political, social, and economic life, and how too many still do not know or appreciate the long history of slavery that existed in Canada for more than two centuries.

Traversing histories of discrimination from slavery and anti-Black racism to Indigenous dispossession and genocide integral to the founding of North America, and recent horrific discoveries of mass unmarked graves on the grounds of residential schools, Dr. Thompson shows "there is violence at the core of state power" (83). Professor Thompson's work highlights how "tensions between home and abroad, fixity and mobility, the familiar and the foreign, travel and habitat, rootedness and displacement hold a special meaning in Black political thought" (12). Contextualized amidst broader socio-political critiques of racialized police brutality, Thompson revisits author Ta-Nehisi Coates's questions: "How do I live free in this black body?" and other such questions having "occupied Black political thinkers for centuries: What is the cause of racial domination, and how does it intersect with class, gender, nationality, and sexuality? Who are our enemies, who are our friends, and can we – should we—form

coalitions with other oppressed peoples? Are white people trustworthy as allies, and can they be convinced to abandon racism?” (p105-106).

Life, freedom, and equality continue to be hard fought for but under threat across jurisdictions, from the overturning of the well-established constitutional right to abortion in the USA resulting in mass marches and protests; to events in Ukraine and the heightened gendered burdens of care in times of conflict and with ruptures to family, food and resource insecurities, and compromised access to education, health and other social benefits. In Afghanistan, such ruptures and harms are compounded with sex segregation and a further Taliban ban restricting women’s education and attendance at universities; men walked out of exams and universities in solidarity of their protest. In Israel, Orthodox parties push politically for the adoption and legalization of sex segregation of public events, likened to the theocratic laws of Iran (post Islamic Revolution). In Iran, the feminist led revolutionary movement of Women, Life, Freedom, evolved from initial protests over the death of Jina Mahsa Amini, a 22 year old Kurdish Iranian woman who in September 2022 died following custody by the morality police over improper veiling. Civilian video recordings since document the extent of police brutality against protestors, with thousands detained in prison, arrested, and many being summarily prosecuted in expedited proceedings (including for capital crimes). The fight in Iran, as elsewhere, is for an ordinary life; for freedom from oppression, and in pursuit of liberty, personal security, and equality, and one that has united children and youth, with adults and peoples of diverse genders, races, religions, ethnicities, and sexual orientations in Iran for regime change. It is met with solidarity and support by the Iranian diaspora politically mobilizing to raise awareness through organized peaceful marches and protests. Members of the broader human family across jurisdictions have taken public action, positions in parliaments and politics and at the UN. Digital media is critical in all cases for sharing of information, for mobilization, for substantive access to knowledge (and education) even as access to the internet and freedom of expression has in some contexts been formally restricted and in other contexts is practically so, with gendered digital divides.

We are also reminded of the wisdom and veracity of the words of the great Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., imprisoned for political protest, in his 1963 *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Integral to the visioning of better alternative futures in this call is attention to intersectional identities, the value of emotion, from anger and grief to love and love ethics with related values of care, mutual respect and embrace for our shared humanity, for each other and the planet, without denial or erasure but with recognition of intersectional identities, and celebration of our individualities and differences. DigitALL for education, information, and community transcends territorial mappings and expands the possibilities of belonging and for radical collaboration, resistance, reckonings, and (r)evolutions beyond the polities of nation states, just as women’s human rights, including to equality, freedom, education, and reproduction, come further under attack worldwide. Transnationally, justice demanding movements refuse to be extinguished under state power and resist restrictions of access; “care for the stranger”, as bell hooks would say, finding in *All About Love: New Visions* that “[t]here can be no love without justice...abuse and neglect negate love.” (19-20).

The collaborative human spirit promises to persevere in revolutionizing our thinking, and thereby evolving our realities into a co-created world filled with hope, and indeed love, premised on a shared human struggle.

Canada is a signatory to several international human rights instruments that together commit to the elimination of all forms of discrimination on the basis of race, disability, and gender. Moreover, the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 to secure active state engagement in bringing all laws, policies, and practices into compliance with the Convention on the Eradication of Discrimination against Women.

Globally, the commitment to eliminate inequality between genders is found in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 and elimination of inequalities within and among countries is found in (SDG) 10. The SDGs are 17 interconnected global goals committed to by the 193 Member States of the UN to make the world a better place. The UN's call is for nothing less than full substantive equalities among all peoples, and the UN 2030 Pledge to *leave no one behind and start with the most behind first*, is set out in this invitation for radical collaboration(s) for a better world. The timeframe for needed collective action, in climate, food, and health justice, to overcome violence, oppression, and discrimination in all forms wherever they exist, to alleviate structural conditions and wealth disparities, to provide mutual respect for others and advance the true measures and metrics of progress through love, care, compassion, and reverence for all life is now.

This conference focuses on the range of urgent changes called for by international human rights instruments and the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, bringing together the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1981), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) implementing CEDAW, the Beijing+25 Generation Equality Campaign (2020), the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2018), the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 5 and SDG 10, the Paris Climate Accord (2018), and the Leaving No One Behind commitments in the 2030 Agenda. Contributions that document how increasingly remedial CEDAW and Beijing Platform implementation outcomes are now being used to address any or all of the 17 SDGs, their indicators, and their targets (see: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/> for the full detailed lists) – particularly those that contain commitments to gender equality, poverty eradication, and sustainability commitments (e.g., SDGs 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 17) – are welcomed.

Essential to this call for proposals on paths to post-pandemic recoveries, reckonings, and indeed (r)evolutions, for the elimination of all forms of inequalities, and sustain/abilities that leave no one behind is a call to our shared humanity. We invite proposals focusing on sources of rupture and cohesion, how to use politics, love, care and compassion, and/or the many forms of legal, constitutional, human rights, and statutory instruments – whether in legal contexts and/or in the contexts of civil society advocacy groups – to mobilize for impactful change and to examine how best to eradicate specific intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination that disproportionately affect marginalized groups, be they racialized, Indigenous, low income, disabled, migrant, non-urban, or segregated persons in all walks of life. We welcome your contributions to this movement, better together.

As the great 13th century Iranian poet, Sa'adi aptly stated (translation):

*All human beings are members of one frame,
Since all, at first, from the same essence came.
When time afflicts a limb with pain
The other limbs at rest cannot remain.
If thou feel not for other's misery
A human being is no name for thee.*

This is the 15th year anniversary of the FLSQ IWD events and will be the first conference to be delivered in a hybrid format. The event will be held in person and webcast to registrants and opportunity for speakers who are remote to join in through Zoom to expand geographic accessibility.

We particularly encourage submissions that address anti-Black racism and all forms of discrimination, mobilization and political agency across jurisdictions for gender equality, and through the use of digital technology in pursuit of social and individual justice in diverse polities, and the role of law – and love – compassion, and community toward the elimination of all forms of inequalities within and among countries. Contributions that demonstrate how research and data gaps can be filled to ensure full analysis of the indicators being used to measure progress in meeting the SDGs are welcome.

Dates:

Friday Mar. 10 from 1 pm to early late afternoon/early evening; Saturday Mar. 11 from 9:30 am until mid to late afternoon (tbc).

Location and accessibility:

This conference will be conducted in person at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario and parts of the conference may be streamed via secure links to be provided to conference participants/registrants.

Submitting proposals for individual presentations or for complete panels:

Email a one paragraph abstract and title to Bitá Amani amanib@queensu.ca and Kathleen Lahey, kal2@queensu.ca at your earliest convenience, and kindly copy our assistant Natalie Moniz-Henne natalie.henne@queensu.ca. Acceptances may be issued on a rolling basis.

Deadline for receipt of all abstract and bio submissions:

February 22, 2023, at 11:59p.m. – extended to February 27, 2023, at Noon

For further information, contact:

Prof. Bitá Amani, amanib@queensu.ca and Prof. Kathleen Lahey, kal2@queensu.ca, Co-Directors, Feminist Legal Studies Queen's, Faculty of Law, Queen's University.

Please check our conference website at <https://femlaw.queensu.ca/conferences/flsq-conference-2023> for registration details after February 15th, 2023. We look forward to radical collaborations, and to having you join us in celebration of International Women's Day 2023!

Queen's University sits on the traditional lands of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe Peoples