

Breakout Sessions II, 9/23, 1:30-2:30 pm (attendees choose one):

Am I on Mute? The Psychological Impact of Systemic Racism on Black Women in the Workforce

Presenter Name(s): Sheryl Neverson, Ph.D. LICSW, LCSW-C

Presenter Affiliations: Howard University

To say life is a struggle for Black Women in the workplace, especially in these uncertain times, would be an understatement. This struggle is impacted by the effects of structural racism, which makes the average struggle switch from a slight burden to a crushing force that presses you to the bone. What makes these burdens even more debilitating is being a Social Worker on the front lines during a pandemic providing care for the most vulnerable populations.

Black Women have a history of being underrepresented and discriminated against in the workforce. Using music and participant discussion, this presentation will guide participants to understand, how to identify systemic workplace issues and hope to build resiliency and cope through these situations.

De-Centering Whiteness in Participant-Focused Mental Health

Presenter Name(s): JoLeah Gorman, LGSW, MSW

Presenter Affiliations: Mary's Center

Without a deep, reflective, and honest education about white supremacy, skilled clinicians and administrators can miss the mark when it comes to empowering students and families of color involved in participant-focused mental health programs. White supremacy is so enmeshed in the culture of the United States that it can only be decreased with focused, intentional, and reflective work. This presentation will, in a judgement-free and kind space, educate participants about the ways white supremacy is present in the systems and individual practices of participant-focused mental health. Participants will identify ways their organization and they personally perpetuate white supremacy through times of silent personal reflection and journaling, acknowledge their lament and desire to change, and then be given a set of ideas as to how to de-center whiteness. While it is a long journey, participant-focused mental health practices that de-center whiteness are the only way to truly empower and change the communities of color many of us work in.

The Courage to Be Anti-Racist: The Challenge for Leadership

Presenter Name(s): Tracy Whitaker, DSW, ACSW

Presenter Affiliations: Howard University

The convergence of the COVID19 pandemic with a racism pandemic in 2020 ignited an era of racial justice reckoning that extended across the world. It also re-ignited the social work profession's interest in and responsibility to address the racism within both the larger society and also within the social work profession. Forums, town hall meetings and various actions and statements emerged from the major social work organizations. Yet, these actions, noble as they were, highlighted an unpleasant truth. Within the social work profession, racism has been and continues to be alive, well, and active. Many organizations that are led and staffed by social workers fall short of creating workplaces that are inclusive, anti-oppressive and that honor diversity. Some of the reluctance of leaders to create anti-oppressive environments results from a lack of skills, whereas some reluctance results from a lack of courage. Developing anti-racists environments will require conversations and behaviors that are often difficult and risky. Confronting dynamics such as privilege, bias and inequity can challenge social work leaders in uncomfortable ways. Yet, social work leaders have an array of skills and tools that can position their organizations to be inclusive and equitable. This workshop will help leaders understand how to harness the courage to create the organizations that they and their colleagues will celebrate and protect.