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Courage to Act Webinar - Why Create Black Survivor Spaces on Campus?

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Anoodth: Hello everyone and welcome to the twelfth webinar in our series. My name is Anoodth Naushan, Project Manager of Courage to Act. Courage to Act is a two-year national initiative to address and prevent gender-based violence on post secondary campuses in Canada. It builds on the key recommendations within Possibility Seeds vital report, *"Courage to Act, Developing a National Framework to Address and Prevent Gender-Based Violence at Post Secondary Institutions."*

Our project is the first national collaborative of its kind to bring together scholars, experts and advocates from across Canada to end gender-based violence on campus. A key feature of our project is our free webinar series, where we invite leading voices to discuss key concepts and share promising practices on addressing and preventing gender-based violence on campus. Supported by CACUSS, these webinars are also recognized learning opportunities. Attendance at ten or more live webinars and our National Skillshare Series will count towards an online certificate. Our project is made possible through generous support and funding from the Department for Women and Gender Equality [WAGE] Federal Government of Canada.

We begin today's webinar by acknowledging that this work is taking place on and across the traditional territories of many Indigenous nations. We recognize that gender-based violence is one form of violence caused by colonization to marginalize and dispossess Indigenous peoples from their lands and their waters. Our project strives to honour this truth as we move towards decolonizing this work and actualizing justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across the country.

I'd like to pause now and invite everyone to take a few deep breaths with me because this work can be challenging. Many of us may have our own experience of survivorship and of supporting those we love and care about who have experienced gender-based violence. A gentle reminder here to be attentive to our well-being as we engage these difficult conversations. And before I introduce our speakers today, a brief note on the format; our speakers will present for about 35 – 40 minutes and I invite you to enter questions and comments into the question and answer box and I will monitor this and together, we will pose these questions to them at the end.

The Q&A will happen in the last ten minutes of the webinar. At the end of the webinar you will find a link to the evaluation form. We'd be grateful if you'd take a few minutes to share your feedback as it helps us to improve. This is anonymous. Following the webinar, I will also email you with a copy of the evaluation form and a link to the recording so that you

can view the webinar again and share with your networks. We have two really wonderful speakers today and I'm excited to introduce them to you now.

Vatineh Magaji is from Thompson, Manitoba (Treaty 5 territory) and now resides in Winnipeg (Treaty 1 territory) where she completed her B.Sc. in Genetics at the University of Manitoba. She served two terms as president of Justice for Women Manitoba (2018-2020), a student group addressing Gender-based Violence within the campus and the greater community. She continues her advocacy work with involvement in Courage to Act's Student Organizer Community of Practice, with REES through the Youth Advisory Board, and various roles at the Women's Health Clinic.

And Casandra Fullwood is a Scarborough born Afro-Caribbean woman residing in Tkaronto. Her feminist politics are largely focused within black community and navigating feelings of bodily unsafety and lack of autonomy within white society. Casandra is the founder of We Heal Together which is a black survivor space that focuses on collective community healing. Casandra is in her fourth year of Arts and contemporary studies at Ryerson University. In her free time, Casandra likes to watch Love Island and create art that centers black intimacy and Zami love.

So as you can see we have a really wonderful and brilliant lineup today and I am excited now to turn it over to our presenters.

Vatineh: Thank you very much for that introduction. I am Vatineh. I am very glad to be here to speak on this very important topic, it's always been important but I am glad that the culture of conversation is shifting to focus this conversation and I'm excited to be able to share my experience and learn from everyone today.

Casandra: Everyone I am Casandra and I am also glad to be here and talk about why we should focus on supporting Black survivors and Black survivor like support groups. Thank you so much to Courage to Act for bringing me here today.

Vatineh: So here is a list of the acknowledgements we wanted to make. We want to also make it clear that this information and this knowledge comes from a variety of resources, including and beyond what is listed here. We need to recognise the experience of ourselves in this conversation, mentors, the community, academics, people who have been organising to do this work, and we also need to acknowledge the parallels that can be drawn between Black survivorship and Indigenous survivorship. Early in the Land Acknowledgement we talk a little about colonialism and its impact on gender-based violence and we want to expand on that a little bit later. We also want to make it clear that this work and this knowledge is not isolated or it's not insular, it comes from a variety of sources.

So in our conversation we want you to first talk about what makes Black survivors different from others. What sets them apart. So we will go through each of these elements and hopefully that will help give us a picture to understand, first why they are different, and then how we can

serve them in a way that is catered to them and their individual experiences.

So we know that the experience of gender-based violence can never be generalised per se, but when we talk about "Black experiences" there are some commonalities that apply to a Black experience that can be thus generalised or applied to gender-based violence survivorship.

So the first of these is the risk of microaggression. So, at any point in a person of colour's life or a Black person's life specifically there is a risk of microaggression solely based on the fact that we are interacting with humans and humans do have a tendency of making mistakes. And sometimes these mistakes can cause harm, that's not even accounting for the people who are intentionally causing harm just by virtue of interacting with others there is that risk, right. In responding to disclosures the risk of microaggression can be or is analogous to maybe that which perpetuates rape culture, right, in the same way that that is harmful.

So when Black survivors utilise non-Black spaces, there is that underlying risk of being triggered by violent language by virtue of them being survivors and the use of language that promotes rape culture. But then there's that additional layer of the risk of microaggression that is applied. This has the potential to cause a kind of underlying defensiveness in the survivor who is seeking out these resources and that serves to protect them from hurt. This reaction though can be perceived as like dismissal or apathy and that is something that we want to circle back on a little bit later.

So our idea or our thought process is that being paired with someone that looks like you as a survivor can help create this underlying comfortability as opposed to defaulting to defensiveness, and it can also provide a chance for the survivor to not have to explain the microaggression, be able to skip over that part of the explanation and kind of get to the root of their primary concern, which might be their experience in gender-based violence.

Casandra: So next we are going to talk about the different ways in which Black survivors have to protect members of their community and they are concerned about the stereotypes that are perpetuated when they enter survivor spaces. Black survivors, even though, like Vatineh said earlier we don't all represent the same experience, Black survivors are still upholding the entire Black community when they enter survivor status. So with that being said they don't want to perpetuate Black people as violent, Black men as sexual predators and things like that. So with that concern it is really hard to disclose to people who already have preset notions of what Blackness is or what Black community is. There is also the idea of policing and authority perpetuating harm onto Black communities. So how are Black survivors able to enter survivor spaces and not be told oh the police could be the first option for you, if that's not a safe option. I would also like to add that a lot of times in survivor spaces there is like a notion of hypo-sexualization directed towards Black survivors. So it is hard for them to be seen as people who can have harm inflicted upon them.

Vatineh: So part of what Casandra is touching on can be, I guess, can be expanded on with the term misogynoir. So when we are defining that as one of the stereotypes of Blackness and we'll expand on other stereotypes as well, misogynoir specifically refers to basically the intersection of both Blackness and presenting as feminine or being a woman, however it applies to the survivor. So this causes kind of a double jeopardy of hatred essentially because there are identities that lead to people wanting to control your body, but also to display your body and own your body, and also repress your body in all these same ways. So all these things come together to create an environment that is generally unsafe and when it comes to survivorship of sexual violence we can see that playing out in the way that these survivors are perceived.

So on the screen there is a screenshot of an article, a series of articles by these authors who were touching on the idea of misogynoir and how it plays out in popular culture. So in the article or in this specific part, part three, they were talking about the WAP music video and the ripple and the impact that it had on our culture essentially when it first came out, and they discuss how that messaging would have been received if they were not women owning their sexuality and taking back what had previously been taken from them. So I encourage everyone to give each of those parts a read because in the third part they also expand the impact of having these notions in our culture of wanting to repress women even if it is subconscious and how it impacts the way that we perceive violence against women especially Black women.

And they use the example again very directly tied to this topic of Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion promoting this music and putting out these music videos are sexualised but it's them sexualising themselves and owning their sexuality. And we see kind of the flip side of the idea that Black women shouldn't be sexual or only on our terms applied to when Meg was shot by a Black rapper and the discourse that was going on around that event. Meg was, you know, met with a lot of victim blaming and people trying to understand what she would have done to deserve this type of violence and things like that which is a conversation that we see a lot when it comes to survivors of gender-based violence as well. So we can see this as a very concrete example of the kind timeline of misogynoir that plays out in popular culture and the way that words become actions and become feelings.

Casandra: Before we move on to the next one I want to add that like misogynoir is a term created by Moya Bailey, she is a Black woman who just wanted to talk about the specific misogyny that Black woman face, and like Vatineh said Black women should be allowed to own their sexuality and express notions of pleasure or anything that is self-advocating for bodily autonomy.

Next I am going to talk about hyper-sexualization and generational trauma and why that plays a role in Black survivor, or should play a role in Black survivor support. Hyper sexualization is something that Black women have been facing since the colonial project has started. The ideas that Black women are seen as more sexual or wanting to be pursued or even our very own bodies are seen as for the male gaze in

relation to our Blackness is a form of hyper sexualization and this also affects people who are non women when we think about the Black body. I added Patricia Hill Collins' book Black Sexual Politics because she talks a lot about how Black people are viewed as, or Black sexuality has been co-opted by whiteness and replaces Black people's autonomy to experience sex in a non-violent way. It's a good read if you want to read further on how hyper sexualization influences sexual trauma. Within my survivor spaces that I create I try to take note that sexual violence might be something that is passed on generationally and might not be a first person experience that Black folks experience but it is something that they feel within white gaze.

Vatineh: So on this side we will want to expand on some of the prevailing stereotypes of Blackness that are in play, and how they relate to people's experience in seeking support for gender-based violence and why traditional means of seeking support might not necessarily work for them. So the first of these stereotypes is that hyper sexualization that Casandra had touched on earlier, and really the point that I wanted to raise is that this underlying sentiment of Black women and we'll touch on why this extends to the entire Black community how, later on, but this hyper sexualization gives the underlying feeling that when violence occurs against these women because they are hyper-sexualized then it is an explanation. It makes sense that they would experience this type of violence because they are seen as being all these things. They are seen in these ways. So we need to understand and acknowledge that and the way that it creates this ambivalence towards Black survivors. Just like we saw in the example of Cardi B and Meg Thee Stallion and the way that they were seen because of their embracing of their hyper sexualization. We also see in the way that Meg was reacted to when she had that violence enacted against her.

The next is the strong Black woman and that is exemplified in the picture that we have attached here. The quintessential figure of this idea is Aunt Jemima. So here we see her living to serve this strange white boy who doesn't appear to be related to her in any way but it extends past this idea of servitude to the white person. This underlying idea of strength and being a caregiver, living to serve others in her family, putting her own needs aside, it can be connected to this racist belief that existed for a long long time that Black people in general had a higher threshold for pain. This was used to justify medical torture and experimentation in the name of scientific advancement and we can see a very clear-cut example of this in the work of James Marion Sims. He is said to be the father of modern gynaecology but it is because he was doing experimentation on Black women without any sort of sedation or anaesthetic.

So the aftershocks of these behaviours are felt today and you can see them through the stereotype that Black women don't need support, that they handle things internally. They don't want to burden their families. And this creates a very real barrier to accessing traditional supports by either withholding these supports or not offering them to the same degree that would be offered to a white survivor. But there is also an internalised stigma towards and associated with accessing traditional counselling services. So all those factors play into, not only how

traditional resources may not be applicable or may not be appropriate for Black survivors, but also the way that Black survivors feel excluded from these spaces.

Casandra: I do want to also add that like with that being said, it does create a sense of a lack of apathy, a lack of general emotional response to Black survivors. And if Black survivors are unable to access spaces where they are humanised it could be a huge problem. So I just wanted to, like all these like historical contexts and providing you with information in terms of the colonial gaze, hyper sexualization it all contributes to lack of emotional response and empathy towards Black survivors.

Vatineh: Absolutely, and that is also something that we can see in this last point, the idea of the angry Black woman. This underlying defiance, non-cooperativeness, aggressiveness, belligerence, when these are the subtexts of how we see a Black survivor it makes the interactions that we have with them misguided, and it doesn't help us get to the root of these behaviours. We miss the context as to why these behaviours might be taking place. So with this stereotype a good reaction from a Black survivor could be interpreted in a different way if a white survivor were acting similarly. So because we touched earlier on the fact that Black survivors may struggle with opening up for fear of microaggression or judgement it makes sense what the root of that type of reaction might be if they seem guarded or closed off.

So when disclosing trauma that has occurred we should be creating a space in which Black survivors don't feel pressured to modify their tone for those fears for fear of playing into those stereotypes or that their audience might change their perception. Instead we want to encourage creating spaces where people feel okay to react in any way and not feel as though they are speaking for their whole community. So all of these stereotypes and what we have touched on so far create caricatures of people. The dramatization of an individual makes it easy for us to disconnect and thus downplay what they are expressing and how they are feeling.

So we have to ask; who are we including in our definition of a survivor and how is that reflected in our practice? So when we cast judgement and change our body language towards someone who doesn't fit into the picture of what we think or when we hear survivor, it excludes so many people that deserve our respect and deserve access in the same way as that someone who fits into the box of how we picture a survivor does have. And this relates to how we see ourselves as Black people and the community that is felt. Whenever there is a Black person in the news, no matter what the reason there is kind of this ripple effect or there is this thing that ties us all together just by virtue of our Blackness. So when I see a Black woman can be Vice President elect of the United States it means that a Black person can lead a meeting and can lead a webinar and can be in a position of power.

In the same way though, and neither of them should necessarily speak, should speak for the entire community, but in the same way when we hear about Black people suffering and being put in positions that make them do things that they wouldn't necessarily normally do or anything

like that, it also casts a different light on the community. And all these kinds of ups and downs even us out in a sense, but none of these are warranted in any way. They shouldn't mean anything about the community as a whole.

Casandra: As Vatineh said, like one Black person or Black person from the Black community doesn't speak for our whole community but I think you also mentioned something that I like to call collective Black grief and that is something that is real to Black survivor spaces and just Black spaces in general like when we think about what does it look like to be a survivor lack of bodily autonomy is a problem within consent culture, it is a problem within sexual violence to see that Black people aren't given bodily autonomy. It is a survivor issue, so I consider that a part of survivor work, the issue of Black people not being able to move freely in the world.

Definitely and it also plays into, what we will touch on in a little bit, as like Black people as a monolith and understanding what one Black person experiences is not representative of the whole Black experience. So in kind of shedding this responsibility to serve or represent the Black community well we need to instead focus on that community healing and using the grief, that Black grief that is felt and being able to also help if you are community healing. So we need to make a very conscious effort to as a community include survivors that may not fit the mould and that includes Black men, Black trans folk and non-binary folk, in the same work.

So as we have kind of been alluding to we can't kid ourselves into thinking that what we described prior to this is representative of the whole Black experience. We have to be very clear that Blackness is not universal, it's not one size fits all, and like in any group we can't fit all Black survivors into one box and then apply an empiric solution to their problems. There might be superficial similarities that unify us and specifically how Black people are perceived and how they can move through the world, but a lot of life experiences and just by virtue of where you were born changes your Black experience as well. So like Anoodth mentioned I was born in Thompson, Manitoba which is rural northern Manitoba, a mining community and my Blackness and the way that I relate to Black people is heavily influenced by that fact, the fact that there were not very many Black families in Thompson, especially when I was growing up and even fewer Nigerian families. So me relating to the people I was raised with, which was primarily white people has influenced how I interact with Black people as well and that fact has changed the way that I guess to feel about my Blackness as well. And that is something that is a kind of ongoing thing as I continue to move through the world.

So like you see in these different examples or these different ways that are listed on the screen even that is clear to us, or should make it clear to us that we cannot assume that all Black people have had these same life experiences and have similar negative experiences with police or only want to seek out alternative methods. Again we can't just make any assumptions about Blackness. There is a podcast called Dating White, it's hosted by Myisha Battle and Nkechi Njaka, they are two Black mixed-race women and they talk about their experience in being raised

in similarly white cultures in like Minnesota and they way that relates to their dating history and their dating lives now especially in dating white men.

So in one episode, one of the hosts was describing where she was on a date with this guy and he was white and he was feeling very self righteous in the fact that he knew about the statistics and he understood the Black experience and sexual violence but when she said that she had actually never experienced any type of violence in her life he questioned that and he actually didn't believe it because he was so familiar with the stats, and this is something that is pretty easy to kind of guffaw at that. It's a pretty blatant example of exactly what we are talking about, but it also kind of makes us think about our own practice, makes us wonder; am I making assumptions about this person based on the colour of their skin essentially, that's what it boils down to. So we want to make sure that in this next section we are introducing different ways where we can introduce community healing and alternative or non-traditional methods of attaining justice. We are not assuming that any Black person that walks through our doors is looking for this. Instead we want to use it as a way to fortify our current practices and to create these spaces or uplift these spaces that are already existing.

Casandra: So in terms of focusing on what we have instead of what is missing I want to add that there are Black community members and there are Black survivors on campus who are doing the work at a grassroots level and you need to find them, seek them out and support them throughout their process. So I think as Vatineh said earlier, moving away from the white savior complex and understanding that Blackness is not monolith and Black people are able to provide support amongst themselves, practice community collective care and provide different outlooks to survivorship and healing. I also think that there is something to say about how a community practices like self growth and reliance, like Vatineh put this picture of braiding hair, like these are ways in which we take care of each other and heal with each other. It might look different for folks outside of the community but these are valid ways of practising healing. I also run a survivors' support group, for Black folks and we practice survivor based Reiki healing and a lot of people might not find it traditional as to how we are going to cope with sexual violence but a lot of Black survivors who want this type of service they come to do that because it's familiar to them culturally.

Vatineh: So in our next slide we will talk about some examples or some kind of jumping off point of what a Black centered space actually looks like. Casandra will expand on this more and have touched a little bit about her group but I'm excited to hear more about that as we continue along. The first example is engaging in pleasure activism. So Casandra touched on earlier this notion of reclaiming sexuality and reinfusing pleasure into the sexual experience as opposed to sole associations with trauma, with removal, with lack of autonomy. So reinvigorating the pleasure aspect of sex in after experience sexual or gender-based violence is an important part of the work that Casandra does and the work that we would like to see people continue to do and implement in their own PSIs after this presentation.

Additionally we are talking context of where this healing takes place, so it doesn't have to be in a clinic setting or in a counsellor's office. Similar to the previous picture we saw someone braiding hair in the living room, cooking in the kitchen enjoying people's or your relative's company these are all locations and these are all situations in which healing can take place and should take place even if it doesn't look conventional to us from the outside looking in. We are talking about closed spaces for collective community healing so we are mentioning this term community and that we understand that not every Black person even wants to be a part of this community necessarily. Their Blackness is imposed just by virtue of how they look. We want to give people the opportunity to centre their healing in the community in which they might feel comfortable, in which they were raised, and again surrounded by people that look like them.

And then we talk about access to transformative justice. And Casandra can speak more on what that means, but we are talking about a system that exists as our general justice system, as basically all the systems that are outplayed in Canada, in North America in our western culture currently. A lot of those systems contribute or were founded solely to suppress Blackness essentially so when we are talking about healing and talking about healing within that system that has existed to keep us down for so long we want to give alternatives to seeking justice that don't necessarily look typical or what we are used to necessarily but are sometimes even better serving of the community itself.

Casandra: So I want to touch on my Black survivor support group. It is something that I started out of necessity to have my experience centered and also to have collective community care around me as a Black survivor myself. And I was working in other survivor spaces and I realised every Black survivor is coming to me, talking to me because they were comfortable in disclosing something that might have happened in the community or even talking about how they feel hyper sexualized, on the dating apps. Or comments about not feeling comfortable moving in their body and these are unique comments and experiences that I also experienced myself, right.

So through this my school we have a sexual violence office called Consent Comes First. They supported and funded this group. They allowed me to lead the process and they provided their like allyship support. And that's really important to me because it's not like they are asking me to do a workshop, one-time workshop or one-time panel on what it means to be a Black survivor, they understood that Black survivors needed a specific group to be affirmed and to experience alternative healing methods and they were like okay, we are going to support you in doing this.

So my group meets every month and every month we have a different workshop with a co-facilitator and we explore alternative healing methods. This upcoming month we are going to have a workshop on reclaiming pleasure and bodily autonomy which I talked about earlier through the lens of a Black survivor through people who have experienced hyper sexualization, moving throughout white society so how can you reclaim pleasure within that. We Heal Together is also

survivor run, like I said run by me and it's, we are not providing therapy that's not what we do there, but again it's like collective community healing and we are supporting each other through this process.

It is like focused, it acknowledges gender-based violence of course, but we do have men who attend the group because we understand that colonialism has affected the way that Black men move throughout society too within a sexual gaze, so in our group we like to also acknowledge queer Black bodies and like look at how in queer spaces we practice consent because it's not black and white. There is a lack of acknowledgement of seeing gender-based violence and things like that. We also try to talk about accountability and what can transformative justice look like, which is on the next slide. So we talk about non-colonial forms of justice, like how do people practice justice and accountability apart from the colonial aspect of things which is like police, the court justice system and we don't want people to feel like they can't do that, like this is something that I will never push on to someone.

It's more so if someone questions how can I hold a community member accountable in a certain type of way. We can explore transforming the justice model. Transforming of justice is survivor centric and the survivor's choice and is survivor led. Like it's all from the perspective of the survivor and the survivor gets a say in what happens and its community care involvement. So if a survivor is like I want this elder there to facilitate a conversation between me and someone who has made me uncomfortable, things like that would be how we practice transforming of justice. It's also not – it can also be holding your community accountable for things that you perpetuate, so like how do we perpetuate gender-based violence as a community, like how are Black man perpetuating sexual violence towards Black women, cat-calling things like that.

Like these are community accountable conversations we can have and acknowledge oppressive systems put in place to have like enforced like we see each other sexually. So transformative justice is like, I'm not going to say I am an expert on it but it's something that I have been learning to do. I'm actually – Ryerson held a conference on this about 2 years ago I believe and I sat on a panel and it was called Can Justice Heal? and just explored different ways in which folks acquire justice and accountability from community members who perpetuate sexual violence from any sort of level.

Vatineh: So as we have - touching on and Casandra was able to expand up beautifully we want to – I guess the undercurrent for this presentation is rejecting what a traditional idea of healing looks like instead uplifting and providing legitimacy to these alternative routes of healing of justice of coming to peace in whatever is occurring. So we have been kind of peppering this throughout our talk here, but colonialism really is acting as an infection to our dominant western culture or society and it has created this superiority complex where pain is seen as an opportunity to homogenize, to invade tradition, to make everything one, and these ideas are part of what made early feminism exclusionary. Women need to seat at the table but only some women. Voting rights are so important but not for everyone.

So this imposition of the dominant way as the right way has created an environment where survivors feel discouraged from seeking these alternative routes, or they are stopped altogether even though those alternatives might be better suited to what they need, what their healing looks like. So when we are talking about intersectionality an intersectional approach should be survivor centric in that we are making space for this work to continue as it has been continuing for as long as we can remember and again moving away from this white saviour complex that my way is the right way and you're in pain so let me heal you.

Instead lifting up these methods that have been existing and we can encourage to continue to exist in even greater capacity than they already do is what our work should stem from. And in this idea of stemming from, we need to return to our why in what makes us do this work. So giving legitimacy to these methods that we have talked about so far should contribute to furthering our collective goal of supporting survivors, that being our underlying motivation. So we have to recognize that the default does not equal better, just because it's more comfortable doesn't make it correct, and sometimes people are even better served by deviating from the systems that have created so much harm in the past.

So in the next slide the way that I kind of visualise I guess and understand it is thinking about the ecosystem of our post-secondary institutions. And this again brings us back to our why. So the figure or the picture that I've included here is of a community garden. So in the community garden everyone has their own individual crops and they take care of their own plot but it's not a solo activity, it's not individual activity. There can be a deliberate exchange of knowledge, just taking care of your neighbour and making sure that their growing season is great but there is also an involuntary or an accidental exchange. Just by virtue of sharing soil and being in close proximity, we are increasing the biodiversity that exists in these spaces where increasing access to different insects and cross pollination and all this like involuntary exchange happening and this leads to positive changes in both what you are taking away and what you are bringing back, but also in the land itself. And that is a positive change that exists for better growing seasons in the future as well.

So this idea of the symbiosis and this exchange also exists at our post-secondary institutions because of our mutual goal. So Black folk are hurting and we are needing to fight for this ability to defend ourselves and to protect ourselves and to raise ourselves up. We also need the action of sexual violence frontline workers and administrators at these PSIs, because they are the people that ultimately hold the power to make these changes and to support these existing efforts and make them long term, and make them bigger than they would be otherwise. So you need Black people's voices and their opinions to be able to better serve your Black student body so we can share deliberately this space and knowledge to create this noticeable and long-lasting change and hopefully we can also change the environment for many many seasons to come.

Casandra: I wanted to also add before we go that as Blacks, as survivors in general we should think of like what does it look like to have solidarity because a lot of the people who are doing the frontline work are also survivors. A lot of people experience gender-based violence, so I think of like solidarity other than allyship when it comes to our community. So how are we going to pack the solidarity with each other and within the survivor community. What does that look like? I just want people to think about that more when we think of survivor spaces, like whether we are about solidarity.

Thank you everyone for coming to our webinar.

Anoodth: Thank you so much Vatineh and you Casandra. That was really powerful and very helpful and now I'd like to invite our attendees to share any questions and comments and you can do so by typing these into the Q&A box in the bottom of your screen.

I can see we have a couple already. So the first question for Vatineh and Casandra are, how should I begin to create trust with Black groups on campus in order to start doing this work?

Vatineh: I think that creating trust starts with really internalising the idea that there is a reason for distrust and for not fully giving yourself up to this process because like we outlined before, there is harm associated with it. And in kind of keeping that in mind, my hope is that we are able to I guess recognise and not necessarily put a lot of personal feelings into not being fully drawn in initially but I think as far as to how to actually progress in doing this work it comes from putting yourself at the same level as your community and not coming in as you know you are the hero that's saving it like Casandra has touched on, I think that's a good undercurrent to think about working together and putting yourself on an even playing field in that you recognise that mistakes are very probable and possible and making yourself open to understanding when a mistake has happened and to hearing and not becoming defensive when you know that a mistake has happened, or when someone tells you that a mistake has happened.

And then from there just walking together being very intentional about the application of the ideas that are brought forward as opposed to "oh yes I will think about that", you know. Making these tangible changes and expediting these changes so that your Black community knows that they are being prioritised, or put into importance here.

Casandra: And also understanding that sometimes these Black communities might need spaces where you are not able to join into and there might be closed spaces like my group for example it's a closed space for the Black community and it's not to be exclusionary or to segregate, it's to provide comfortability. So understand that as well and just try, one thing I noticed is like there's like an ownership of survivor spaces sometimes and it shouldn't be that way like where you feel like you have to have an ownership of the space. It could become very exclusionary for people who might not understand all the lingo when it comes to survivor work and might not have done the work that a lot of people have done so like

just try not to have ownership of the space and understand it's a space for healing and support.

Anoodth: Absolutely, thank you. So our next question then is what are some steps that we can take to create a survivor led support group on our campus?

Vatineh: I think just to touch briefly on this point – Sorry, go ahead.

Casandra: Oh go ahead. OK. So some steps that you can take, I don't know if your school has a student union, but you could bring forth a write up to them with your demands with the need for the space, if you want a survivor led space. Also grassroots work as well, reaching out to faculty and staff. A lot of people care about creating the space for survivors, it's just that it's hard to connect the dots at times with who to reach out to. But I also think starting off with just your collective group at first works. And then reaching out to external resources whether to student unions or any admin staff who you feel like have politics that align with your space. I know not every university has an office for sexual violence support, I'm thankful for Ryerson for that, but if they do reach out them works as well.

Vatineh: Yeah. I think the only other thing I have to touch on that point is just this idea that it doesn't have to be a lot. It can be you and one other person who have this idea and that alone just creating that space is part of the work, is leading you closer to your goal. So just making that known and making that available to people is a fantastic first step.

Anoodth: And Casandra, I have a follow up question for you on that. For the Black Survivor Support group, folks are curious about how that space has been going you know within an online environment. Have you noticed any changes or any additional barriers since a shift to an online space?

Casandra: Yes, definitely because people are experiencing Zoom fatigue right now. I am also thinking, we're also creating like documents for people not just having meetings, we have Zoom meetings, but we're also creating documents. We have a Black collective grief document that was created from our first workshop of the year and a lot of people have found it really helpful. We have like a Facebook forum group so there's like alternatives to how we could support each other. It's not the same as it was before, but we're trying our best to provide support for our students. We also created some really great graphics with Black Power Barbie. She's an artist, and she created those beautiful graphics that I shared earlier and they're very affirmative and they're very representative of Black community care, Black survivor led spaces. So just trying to provide alternatives with what we're doing, but yeah it has been hard.

Oh what is bringing you joy in this moment? Just being in this space, I think that it's good to have met Vatineh because it's nice to meet another Black person doing this type of work and who cares about community in this type of way so it was really nice to meet you and talk to you about these things, so that's bringing me joy.

Vatineh: Thank you! I think it's strange, especially because I'm in Winnipeg so like I can see outside, we just got many inches of snow so I'm thinking about how to stay happy indoors and maybe contrary to my resistance to

winter I'm enjoying a lot of like winter themed movies and just like being very comfortable in that and staying home and washing my hands and wearing my mask and being safe. But yeah, I'm finding a lot of joy in delving into this topic and it's something that is kind of an undercurrent to my life, but I'd never really taken the time to sit down and think about synthesizing all of my resources and all of the things that I've learned into something that is like presentable and understanding it in that way so that has also brought me a lot of joy just recognizing the power in all the work that's been done and thinking about all the work that is coming as well.

Anoodth: Perfect. Thank you Casandra. Thank you Vat. So our next question, from an attendee is, I have a small population of Black students at my school. How might I cater to them when there are not any additional resources yet?

Vatineh: I think, my first thought is regarding the practical things that you can because Casandra raised a good point because Casandra raised a great point about seeking advice from your student union and supports through them. In my experience, talking with the student union and people that are more in tune with what's going on on the ground to so to say, is easier in general. So I would say that is a really great starting off point. I would also say that making use of what you already have and just kind of fortifying it with what we've discussed is also a great first step so if you don't necessarily have the means to hire on different people, making sure the people you do have are very well versed in this topic and coming at this topic with that level playing field with the understanding that there's room for error, with seeking out peer supports that are Black that is another great step that doesn't necessarily increase your cost as much, but still is contributing to this peer to peer support or like Black person to Black person support. I think that is another great avenue to take to be able to increase the support that you're able to give your maybe smaller Black population on campus.

Anoodth: Thank you. So I know we have a lot of questions that folks want to ask, but I think we have time for maybe two more. So Vatineh and Casandra folks are asking how do I create solidarity with Black survivors whose lived experienced differ from my own as a non-Black survivor?

Casandra: So like I said earlier, that's like creating survivor solidarity which is what I like to call it. So that's listening to people's experiences, that's the first one. Doing external resources. I know someone in the comments Farrah, asked about three books you would recommend for people to read to better support Black survivors so I mentioned Black Sexual Politics, Hunger by Roxanne Gay is one of my favourite books to read for representation on what it means, like what sexual violence can do Black woman. It's also a good read if you want to learn about fatphobia and have that introspect. Another book, you throw one in there, Vatineh.

Vatineh: Sure. No yeah you're carrying the, doing the leg work on this one. My contribution is Policing Lives, sorry Policing Black Lives by Robyn Maynard. I'm just looking it up here. That I think will give you the perspective and I think there was a comment specifically about Black men and understanding their survivorship. I don't know if I have a

resource for that necessarily, there are some articles that I've seen floating around, but not like a fully fledged book necessarily, but I think Policing Black Lives will give you an understanding specifically to a Canadian context in understanding that. And when it comes to the relationship between Black folk and the police.

Casandra: In terms of like Black men survivors, I think Black Sexual Politics touches a lot on how the Black masculine body has been hypersexualized which I don't really see often so if you would like to read that to give you more insight. And also bells hooks is a good person to read if you want to deconstruct how sexuality affects Black men and masculinity. So yeah.

Anoodth: Great, thank you Casandra, and thank you Vatineh. I'm excited to explore some of those titles a bit more as well and you know maybe in the last two minutes of our webinar I can also chime in with a resource offering because Courage to Act has built a list of resources for gender justice advocates to challenge anti-Black racism and so this is available on the blog section of our website. So any gender justice advocates that Canadian PSIs who are on this call, who are on this webinar, we invite you to read, engage and implement some action plans with the help of those resources and the resources that Casandra and Vatineh shared today.

So Casandra and Vatineh thank you so much for sharing your time and your expertise with us today, we've had a really good discussion. We've learnt a ton and the recording will be available on our website in a few days along with the transcript. And so thank you everyone, thank you to our participants for joining us and for sharing with us today. We take inspiration and appreciate your commitment to addressing and preventing gender-based violence on your campus. We feel very lucky to be able to work alongside each and every one of you so thank you for joining us and a kind reminder as well to complete the evaluation forms at the end.

And another gentle reminder as well because our registration is actually open now for our National Skillshare Series, beginning in January 2021 and the Skillshare Series will highlight the really groundbreaking work happening across Canada to address gender-based violence on campus and it'll showcase the 15 tools and the toolkits that are being developed by 150+ project partners, including our Communities of Practice so you can sign up for that on our website. Yeah that's all for me for now, thank you so much Casandra. Thank you, Vatineh as well and we'll see you at the next webinar series.

Vatineh: Thank you very much.

Casandra: Thank you. Bye. Take care.