

CENTRE FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH

NEWSLETTER, 2014 - 2015

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As I begin my second year as Director, I would like to profoundly thank CFR coordinator **Julia Pyryeskina**, who started her position in September 2014 and who has been an invaluable and steadfast colleague in what was a challenging and exciting year. I would also like to acknowledge outgoing Director **Professor Enakshi Dua** for her tremendous work in fostering the CFR as a site of dynamic, multifaceted feminist research over the past five years, and in steering the Centre to a new five-year Charter in 2013. It is a privilege to be able to build on her work and to learn from the leadership example she set, and I look forward to having her continue to actively engage with the Centre as an Associate.

Over the past year, CFR worked with our Associates in developing research grants, raising a total of **\$383,026** in external funding. Congratulations to **Professor Barbara Cameron** for her SSHRC Connection Grant *Shifting Paradigms, Enduring Legacies: Reflections on the Royal Commission on the Status of Women*, to **Professor Jin Haritaworn** for their SSHRC Insight Development Grant *Marvelous Grounds: Queer of Color Imaginaries of the Toronto Gay Village*, to **Professors Sonia Lawrence and Ena Dua** for their IDRC grant *Study for Judicial Education for Family Law Professionals in Morocco*, to **Professor Nancy Nicol** for a grant from the Law Foundation of Ontario for her project *Envisioning Global LGBT Human Rights*, and to **Professor Sheila Cavanagh** for her SSHRC Partnership Development Grant *Transgender and Performance Ethnography*.

CFR signed on to be a research partner in a successful SSHRC Partnership Grant Letter of Intent headed by Professor Carla Rice, Canada Research Chair in Care, Gender, and Relationships at the University of Guelph and Dr. Eliza Chandler, Artistic Director, Tangled Arts + Disability, entitled *Bodies in Translation: Activist Art, Technology, and Access to Life*. A number of York faculty (many of whom are CFR Associates) are participating in this initiative, and CFR will serve as the York hub, coordinating faculty and graduate student participation, and providing support to knowledge mobilization activities.

We have created a new Activist Scholar at Risk program, raising \$35,000 from five international organizations, as well as the Institute for Feminist Legal Studies and the Nathanson Centre for Transnational Human Rights, Crime and Security at Osgoode Hall Law School here at York, to bring Fahima Hashim an internationally renowned feminist activist from Sudan as our inaugural Visiting Scholar to CFR from April to August 2015 (see our profile in this newsletter).

As a requirement of our new Charter, we worked with the Executive to create an External Advisory Group, whose mandate is to provide input and advice to the Director on strategic planning, outreach and partnerships. The EAG was approved by the CFR Council in May 2015, and I am delighted to welcome the following inaugural members: **Dr. Nadje Al-Ali**, Professor of Gender Studies at the Centre for Gender

Studies, SOAS, University of London; **Dr. Micha Cárdenas**, Assistant Professor in the School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, University of Washington | Bothell; **Dr. Paloma Mohamed**, Senior Lecturer in the Faculties of Social Sciences and Health Sciences, University of Guyana; **Dr. Shahrzad Mojab**, Professor of Adult Education and Women's Studies at OISE/University of Toronto; **Dr. Carla Rice**, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Care, Gender, and Relationships in the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences, University of Guelph; and **Dr. Irma Alicia Velásquez Nimatuj**, Maya K'iche' anthropologist and journalist in Guatemala. More information about the EAG can be found on our website.

In addition to hosting several lectures, talks and workshops, we worked with our Associates to organize three main events: **Professor Kamala Kempadoo's** workshop *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies Transnationally: A Caribbean-Canadian Dialogue* (July 2014); Professor Barbara Cameron's symposium *Shifting Paradigms, Enduring Legacies: Reflections on the Royal Commission on the Status of Women* (April 2015); and the Critical Ethnic Studies Association (CESA) conference, *Sovereignties and Colonialisms: Resisting Racism, Extraction and Dispossession* (May 2015). The CESA conference, held in Canada for the first time, was led by Research Associates **Professor Jin Haritaworn** and **Professor Rachel Gorman**, Graduate Associate **Nadia Kanani**, and **Professors Mona Oikawa** and **Sailaja Krishnamurti**, in collaboration with an extensive network of deeply committed activists, scholars and community organizations who made this event possible.

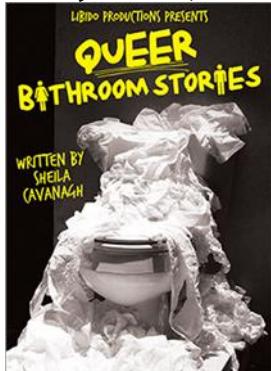
A core part of our mandate is to support graduate student research and training. This year we created a Graduate Caucus to bring together our over 100 Graduate Associates. We supported a conference organized by two of our Graduate Associates, **Jessica Chandrashekhar** and **Emily Rosser**, *Feminisms, Structural Violence and Transitional Justice*, hosted by the Nathanson Centre on Transnational Human Rights, Crime and Security at Osgoode Hall Law School. We worked with two of our Graduate Associates, **Toby Wiggins** and **Daria David**, to develop a proposal for a Sexuality Studies Summer Institute. The Institute will seek to enhance graduate student research and training, with significant international student participation. This is a collaborative endeavour between CFR, the Graduate Program in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies, and the Sexuality Studies program in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies. We are currently in the fundraising phase for a pilot Institute, to be held in 2017.

I would like to thank our 2014-15 Executive for their invaluable support, advice and commitment: **Sarah E. Barrett, Tania Das Gupta, Rachel Gorman, Michael Greyeyes, Jin Haritaworn, Sonia Lawrence, Gertrude Mianda, Jennifer Mussell, David Murray, Weronika Rogula**, and **Sandra Whitworth**. And thanks also to our wonderful GAs, for their hard work and dedication: **Morgan Bimm, Jenna Baraschuk-Modha, Laura Dickie, Shimona Hirschberg, Tiffany Pollock, Erika Standeven, Jack H. Vulpe, Ryan Watts, and Kathryn Weiser**. And finally, many thanks to **Chris Hendershot**, who was interim coordinator in the Summer 2014 and also provided invaluable support to CFR over Fall 2014. We are privileged to be able to rely upon such an extensive network of people committed to fostering CFR as an engaged and collaborative space for feminist research in all its multifaceted and ever-transforming dimensions. We welcome your ideas and contributions as we move forward.

{ HIGHLIGHTS OF 2014-2015 EVENTS }

Opening of Sheila Cavanagh's Play *Queer Bathroom Stories*

May 31 – June 15, 2014



Based on a SSHRC Connections Grant housed at the CFR, *Queer Bathroom Stories* had a very successful run at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre. The play showcased the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans- and queer experiences in public facilities in Canada. The experiences were drawn from interviews for Cavanagh's award winning book *Queering Bathrooms: Gender, Sexuality and the Hygienic Imagination* (2010).

Imaging Home: Resistance, Migration, Contradiction

Exhibition at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archive

June 24 - October 5, 2014



This exhibition was a joint project of the CLGA and Nancy Nicol, principal investigator of *Envisioning*

Global LGBT Human Rights project. The exhibition featured 36 video portraits of LGBT activists in Uganda, Botswana, Jamaica, Guyana, Belize, Saint Lucia and India, alongside works by Guyanese photographer, Ulelli Verbeke.

Endangering Life: The Raced Politics of Gender in an Australian Case of the Criminalization of Exposure to HIV

A lecture by Dr. Barbara Baird,

CFR Visiting Scholar

October 2, 2014

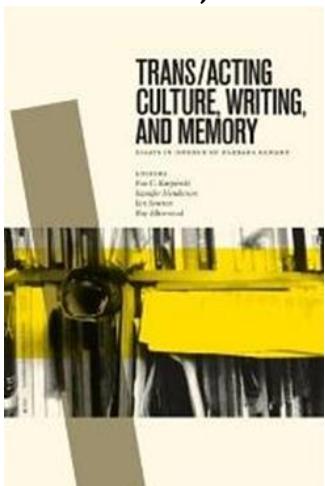
This talk told a story of the criminalisation of exposure to HIV in recent times in Australia. It concerned John Chan, an Australian citizen of Sudanese background living in Adelaide, South Australia. Mr Chan came to Australia as a refugee in 1999. In 2004 he was diagnosed with HIV and, after first coming to the attention of the South Australian Health Department authorities, in 2009 he was arrested on a charge of 'Endangering Life' for having unprotected (consensual) sex with three women and thus exposing them to the virus. In mid-2011, he was sentenced to five and a half years in gaol. The talk used John Chan's story as a case study through which to analyse some aspects of contemporary gender relations in Australia. Its focus was on the position of white women in a cultural and political environment characterised by both conservative and neo-liberal discourses of gender and sexuality.

Trans/acting Culture, Writing, and Memory: Essays in Honour Barbara Godard

Book launch

(Eva C. Karpinski, Jennifer Henderson, Iano Sowtong, and Ray Ellenwood – Editors)

October 21, 2014



Trans/acting Culture, Writing, and Memory is a collection of essays written in honour of Barbara Godard, one of the most original and wide-ranging literary critics, theorists, teachers, translators, and public intellectuals Canada has ever produced. The contributors, both established and emerging scholars, extend Godard's work through engagements with her published texts in the spirit of creative interchange and intergenerational relay of ideas. Their essays resonate with Godard's innovative scholarship, situated at the intersection of such fields as literary studies, cultural studies, translation studies, feminist theory, arts criticism, social activism, institutional analysis, and public memory. In pursuit of unexpected linkages and connections, the essays venture beyond generic and disciplinary borders, zeroing in on Godard's transdisciplinary practice which has been extremely influential in the way it framed questions and modelled interventions for the study of Canadian, Québécois, and Acadian literatures and cultures.

Invoking the Goddess

Research Project and Photography Exhibit by Sharni Jayawardena (photographer) and Dr. Malathi de Alwis (socio-cultural anthropologist)

November 2014



Focusing on the goddess Kannaki-Pattini, an inspiring example of Hindu-Buddhist syncretism in Sri Lanka, the *Invoking the Goddess* exhibit sought to provide reflection on the shared history of beliefs and traditions that make up the social fabric of Sri Lanka, a nation presently attempting to (re)stitch a social fabric torn apart by ethno-nationalisms and civil war. The exhibit combined the photographs of award-winning documentary filmmaker and photographer Sharni Jayawardena, and explanatory texts by sociocultural anthropologist Dr. Malathi de Alwis.

The Creative Arts as Pedagogy: A Transnational Feminist Dialogue

A Panel Discussion with Malathi de Alwis, Shahrzad Mojab, Honor Ford-Smith, Rachel Gorman, Nayani Thiyagarajah and Alison Crosby

November 5, 2014



This panel featured a conversation between transnational feminists who draw on the creative arts to think through their research, politics and the everyday. Panelists engaged with a set of questions

that included: How can artistic approaches to pedagogy undo the limits of speech and language, which all too often essentialize into binaries victim/survivor, object/subject and silence/voice?

How do the arts make silence speak and more importantly, what kinds of transnational feminist narratives are made possible through the arts as pedagogy? How can the arts create transnational feminist conversations that teach the irreconcilable, the unsettling, the intersecting and parallel lived experiences across and within nations, states, histories and politics?

Co-sponsors: YCAR, CRS, Crossroads Gallery, FES, Faculty of LA&PS, VPRI.

Reasonable Accommodations and Gender Equality

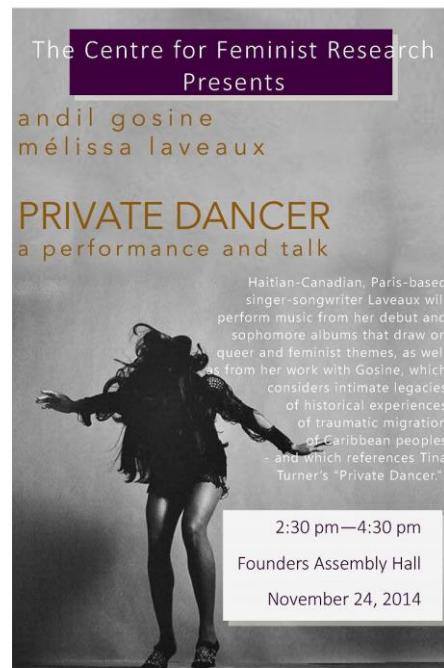
A lecture by Yolande Geadeh
November 11, 2014

In the last years, various institutions have faced the challenge of increasing demands for accommodation on religious grounds. The response so far has been determined by the legal obligation imposed on institutions and employers to find reasonable accommodations in order to avoid discrimination against individuals. This rights-based approach has raised increasing controversy, particularly when some demands contradict the principles of gender equality and secularism. How can we reconcile the protection of freedom of religion with the protection of women's rights, often denied by increasing religious fundamentalisms of various origins? How can we respect freedom of religion, recognized by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, while protecting the common values? How to protect individual liberties and the right of religious minorities, while avoiding the trap of xenophobia and racism?

Lead Organizer: Department of Equity Studies.

Private Dancer

Performance and Talk by Andil Gosine and Melissa Laveaux
November 24, 2014



Andil Gosine and Melissa Laveaux shared their collaborative practice and exploration of creolité in this prose and music performance and talk. Haitian-Canadian, Paris-based singer-songwriter Laveaux performed music from her debut and sophomore albums that draw on queer and feminist themes, as well as from her work with Gosine, which considers intimate legacies of historical experiences of traumatic migration of Caribbean peoples—and which references Tina Turner's "Private Dancer."

Has September 11, 2001 Changed the World for Women?

A lecture by Dr. Bronwyn Winter
November 26, 2014

Dr. Winter addressed a number of questions that form the basis of her forthcoming book about our post-9/11 world, including: Which 'world' did 9/11 change? How do we define 'the world' anyway? What about the women in this shaken 'world'? These and other questions helped Dr. Winter to consider the effects of 9/11 politics at sites that are not always included in post-9/11 analyses; that is, sites that are not the US, Afghanistan, Iraq or Israel/Palestine.

Co-Sponsor: Department of Equity Studies.

Gendering International Student Mobility: An Indian Case Study

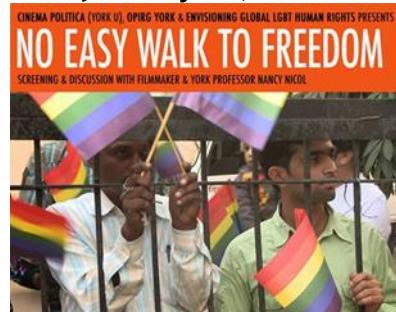
A lecture by Dr. Gunjan Sondhi
January 13, 2015

Using gendered geographies of power as a frame, this talk presented the experiences of Indian students across three space-time locations: before the students left India; while abroad in Toronto; and their return to New Delhi. The discussion, through the narratives of students and their parents (in India), uncovered the gendered power relations in and across geographic and social scales that shape the decision to go abroad, the experience while abroad and the experience of return 'home'.

Co-Sponsors: Migration Matters, Centre for Refugee Studies.

No Easy Walk to Freedom

Screening and Discussion with Filmmaker Nancy Nicol
January 21, 2015



York visual art professor and activist Nancy Nicol, presented her latest documentary *No Easy Walk to Freedom*. Filmed in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Lucknow and rural India, the film tells the story of the struggle to strike down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalizes homosexuality.

Violent Intimacies: Transgender Embodiment, Law, and the State in Contemporary Turkey

A lecture by Dr. Asli Zengin, Visiting Scholar in Sexuality Studies
February 24, 2015

In Turkey, there is little institutional room for ambiguous or ambivalent sex and gender. The state is active in producing and deploying medico-legal projects that constantly strive to disambiguate the ambiguously sexed and gendered bodies, and recruit them as unambiguous heteronormative national subjects. In her talk, Dr. Zengin focused on how the dominant categories of sex and gender gain definition through the formation of violent intimacies and proximities between the Turkish state and transgender people.

Co-Sponsors: Sexuality Studies program, School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies.

VISITING SCHOLARS



Dr. Barbara Baird is an Associate Professor in Women's Studies at Flinders University in South Australia. Her research focuses on the cultural politics of sexuality and reproduction and their intersection with discourses of race and national identity. Her main current research project is a cultural history of the practice of abortion in Australia since the early 1990s. She is also part of a collaboration that is researching the history of 'sexual citizenship' in Australia over the last forty years.

Dr. reese simpkins was a Visiting Scholar in Sexuality Studies from 2013-2015 (a joint initiative between CFR and the Sexuality Studies Program in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies). He completed his PhD in Political Science at York University in December 2012, and is in the process of finalizing a book manuscript entitled "trans* matters, trans* assemblages: becoming and politics," which is based on his doctoral research. While at the CFR, he worked on his new research program, "trans* autopoiesis: material embodiment and the production of space/time."



Dr. Lilia Topouzova is a historian and a documentary filmmaker. Her historical research examines the history and memory of the Bulgarian gulag. She is revising a book manuscript that surveys the establishment of the forced-labor camp system during the communist era and post-1989 attempts to come to terms with the legacy of repression. Dr. Topouzova is currently in pre-production of her third film, "Anaanaga: My Mother," supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Art Council. She is currently a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (COHDS) at Concordia University.

Dr. Asli Zengin was the Visiting Scholar in Sexuality Studies in 2014-15 (a joint initiative between CFR and the Sexuality Studies Program in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies). She completed her Ph.D. in the Department of Anthropology and the collaborative program in Women and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto in May 2014. Her dissertation, *Sex Under Intimate Siege: Transgender Lives, Law, and State Violence in Contemporary Turkey*, focused on the transformation of transgender lives into the microphysical domain of state power for the symbolic and material production of sexual and gender difference in Turkey. Dr. Zengin has since taken up a position as Assistant Professor in the Sexuality and Queer Studies Program at Brandeis University.



{ PROFILED VISITING SCHOLAR }



Fahima Hashim is a Sudanese women's rights defender/activist, researcher, and trainer, with over 27 years of experience in gender and development. Ms. Hashim has placed a special focus on

women's rights and sexuality, on violence against women, and on working with female youth in conflict and post conflict situations. She has written and researched widely in the areas of women's rights and gender equality in Sudan. Ms. Hashim's most recent article, "Organizing Around Rape Law Reform in Sudan," (2014) was published in the *Journal of Women Living Under Muslim Laws*.

Based in Khartoum, Sudan, Fahima Hashim was one of the founders of the Salmmah Women's Resource Centre in 1997, and has served as the Director of the Centre since 2005. Salmmah is an independent feminist resource centre, which provides women and men with information on feminism, violence against women, peace and security, and sexuality. Its main focus is mobilizing and empowering women and women's groups in order to influence policy and overcome structural, political and legal obstacles to the achievement of women's rights. The Centre has played a leading role in the research, documentation and dissemination of knowledge

on women's rights and human rights in Sudan. Salmmah has been an outspoken leader in the area of the promotion of women's rights, and have organized public demonstrations, in attempts to create public pressure as well as a national discourse challenging patriarchal attitudes and perceptions. Due to its public profile and outspokenness on issues facing women in the Sudan, the organization was forced to close by Sudanese authorities in June 2014. There has been a large domestic and international response to this action as leaders at Salmmah proceed with legal action.

The CFR hosted Fahima Hashim and her daughter Nour Hashim from April 1 to August 31, 2015. During her time at CFR, she had a number of speaking engagements in both Ottawa and Toronto, and networked with several organizations in Toronto. She also used the time to read, write and reflect.

Ms. Hashim's Visiting Scholar Position was funded by grants from V-Day, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, Inter Pares, Urgent Action Fund – Africa, the Open Society Institute, Nathanson Centre at York University, and the Institute for Feminist and Legal Studies at York University. This was a pilot initiative to establish an Activist Scholar-at-Risk program at CFR, for which we plan to fundraise for an endowment to support this as a long term project.

RETHINKING WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES TRANSNATIONALLY

A CARIBBEAN-CANADIAN DIALOGUE – WORKSHOP

July 23-25, 2014

sustain a vibrant faculty-student exchange between York and the universities in Guyana and



CFR Research Associate Professor **Kamala Kempadoo**, in collaboration with CFR, the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean and the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, held a three-day workshop that included participants from Suriname and Guyana and faculty and graduate students from York University, Ryerson University and the University of Toronto. The workshop addressed the capacities of Women's and Gender Studies Programs in Canada, Suriname and Guyana to teach and carry out sound analysis, research, and community and policy work under the threat of neoliberal restructuring and uneven program development. The conversations and sessions surrounded curriculum development and course design, links between the academy and community, the documentation of program histories, and gender-sensitive policies and programming. It included sessions on blogging and library research, and importantly, explored ways to

Suriname. Feedback from participants at the workshop was very positive:

- *"I am especially grateful for the knowledge I gained, regarding the strategies one might apply in the classrooms to ensure learning takes place. Thanks also for reinforcing that our multiple ways of being, demand analysis that considers the complexities, not only of gender, but of race, class and location."*
- *"This was a watershed moment for me even to ground with some of my own good Guyanese friends in a different way. It was also good to get to know about our close neighbor ADK (Anton de Kom University of Suriname) and to hear their experiences and work."*
- *"I know that in the work I have tended to be locked into a Guyana place generally without thinking of how this could look outside and how shared experiences matter. There were many learning points for me, but I think the most important is how the academy and the community should be connected especially with gender and sexuality studies."*

The workshop was supported by a grant from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), as well as several internal grants from York University, including the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, the Department of Social Science, the Office of the Vice-President Research and Innovation, and Caribbean Studies at the University of Toronto.

SHIFTING PARADIGMS, ENDURING LEGACIES: REFLECTIONS ON THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN AT 50

SYMPOSIUM, APRIL 15-19, 2015

Organized by CFR Research Associate Professor **Dr. Barbara Cameron** and the CFR, this symposium explored the impact of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in preparation of its 50th anniversary in 2020. The Royal Commission started its work in 1970 with a report of a three-year study that examined the status of women in Canada, and offered recommendations for how the federal government could provide equal opportunities for men and women. The upcoming anniversary is a time to celebrate the advances for women since the 1970s and the contributions of the Commission and feminist political mobilization to bringing these advances about. It is also a time to reflect on the limitations of that legacy in light of the shifts in government policy frameworks today and to consider how reforms have differentially benefited certain groups of women. The symposium provided a platform for such reflections and examined the legacy of the report in light of several generations of academic scholarship, community-based research and advocacy in the field of gender and public policy. Monique Bégin, Executive Director of the Royal Commission, Officer of the Order of Canada, and former federal Minister of Health gave the opening keynote address.

Bringing together academics and those involved in public policy research and gender-related issues, the symposium featured presentations, panels and working sessions. Participants reflected on the assumptions about gender relations that underpin government policies and

public debates today, and considered what alternative gender paradigm(s) should inform government policy in order to improve the status of all women. York PhD Candidates and Professors from the department of Political Science, the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, the department of Equity Studies and Osgood Hall Law School were among the speakers. The symposium aimed to mobilize existing knowledge on gender and public policy of academic and community-based researchers, and promoted the exchange of that knowledge across disciplines, areas of interest and geographic locations.

The symposium was supported by a SSHRC Connection grant, as well as several internal grants from York University, including from the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies, the Office of the Vice-President for Research and Innovation, the Office of the Vice-President Academic & Provost, Department of Political Science, and Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies.



CRITICAL ETHNIC STUDIES ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

SOVEREIGNTIES AND COLONIALISMS: RESISTING RACISM, EXTRACTION AND DISPOSSESSION

APRIL 30 - MAY 3, 2015

CESA is a new Association that approaches scholarship, activism and institution building through a commitment to decolonial, antiracist and other global liberationist perspectives. Their 3rd annual conference, held at York University, was proudly sponsored by the CFR, and was attended by 650 people. The conference brought together scholars and students across generations, academic disciplines and geographic locations. Panels, workshops, roundtables, and performances were linked together through a commitment to critical inquiry into settler colonialism, white supremacy, anti-Black racism, and colonial gender binaries and racial formations. This CESA conference was the first to be held in Canada and honoured Indigenous sovereignty struggles and centred Indigenous, Black, and people of colour activism and scholarship. Bringing feminist, trans, Two-Spirit, queer, and disability perspectives in conversation with critical ethnic studies, the conference was a great success in reinvigorating discussions and political ideas that founded ethnic studies in the academy. Importantly, the conference provided a platform to explore resistance and oppression through a transnational lens that challenges hegemonic Western, racist and colonial methods. The CESA Arts Program highlighted the ways artists, academics and activists have worked together to develop creative resistances, including:

- **The CESA Curated Film Screening Session;**

- **Arts Engagement/Creative Activism Workshops;**
- **Walking Tours;**
- **Performances and Film Screenings**

Participants also attended community-organized events:

- **Appropriate This! Indigenous Knowledge Resistance**, an Indigenous arts showcase, jointly presented by Native Women in the Arts and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network;
- **Toronto's 10th Annual May Day of Action March**, in support of migrant and Indigenous people's struggles on International Workers Day;
- **Say it Loud – A Blockorama Fundraiser** presented by Blackness Yes!, which celebrated Black and African diasporic LGBTTI2QQ communities in Toronto.

The CESA conference was funded by a number of York grants, including: Office of the Vice President Research and Innovation (VPRI), VP Academic & Provost (VPAP), Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies (LA&PS), York University Accessibility Fund (YUAF), Faculty of Environmental Studies, Faculty of Health, Department of Equity Studies, Graduate Program in Film, Department of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics, Graduate Program in Social Work, Graduate Program in Social and Political Thought, Department of Geography, Graduate Program in Department of Geography, Osgoode Hall Law school, Department of Social Science, YCAR, CITY Institute, and Centre for Refugee Studies.