

March 8, 2023

HTI Bulletin

HAPPY INTERNATIONAL

WOMEN'S DAY



THE HARRIET  
TUBMAN INSTITUTE  
FOR RESEARCH ON AFRICA AND ITS DIASPORAS

To recognize International Women's Day, join the Harriett Tubman Institute in centering the remarkable accomplishments and legacy of Black women.



#### Reflecting on women's path in academia.

Initially women of all gender expressions, race, class have been excluded, silenced and not recognized as knowledge producers in academia. The *Polis* was, from the beginning, home only for white men. As we contemplate this International Women's Day on March 8, 2023, we at the HTI dedicate it to the celebration and recognition of women in academia. We stand on the shoulders of all those brave women who had the strength to enter into academia and to write, even though they used pseudonyms because they were not considered as having a mind capable of producing knowledge. All those women producing indigenous knowledge who were and are still being denied and marginalized, we stand on your shoulders. To you, Black women from all horizons in the Diaspora and the continent who have smashed the heavy wall of the academy to create the path for us, we also stand on your shoulders. You paved the way for us and younger generations to dare to enter this academic space because of your audacity, your determination, your resistance, your resilience in the face of the denial of your ability as a human being capable of reasoning, we stand here in academia today, and we are still fighting, following in your footsteps to climb to the mountain top in this space that was formerly strictly the home of only white men and later white women.

As we celebrate this International Women's Day, we are inspired by the words of Harriet Tubman, for whom the institute is named. Harriet Tubman said:

*"I had crossed the line. I was free but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was the stranger in a strange land.*

*(...) . Don't stop. Keep going. If you want a taste of freedom, keep going."*

We women from all the continents have crossed the line and we have arrived in the land of knowers and producers of knowledge although still at the margins.

Let us keep going so we can continue fighting for inclusion so that all the voices that are muted, ignored, and marginalized are heard in academic space that recognizes the diversity of knowledge.

#### Happy International Women's Day!

**Gertrude Mianda, Director, Harriet Tubman Institute  
Professor, Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, Glendon,  
School of GSWS**

#### Réflexion sur le parcours des femmes dans le milieu académique.

Quelle que soit leur race, classe et orientation sexuelle, les femmes ont été exclues, dès le départ du milieu universitaire dans lequel, elles ont été réduites au silence, et non reconnues comme productrices des connaissances. Le *Polis*, depuis la Grèce antique a été le lieu réservé aux hommes de race blanche. Alors que nous célébrons en ce 8 mars 2023, la journée internationale des femmes, l'institut Harriet Tubman voudrait reconnaître les mérites des femmes dans le monde académique.

Nous sommes les héritières de toutes ces femmes courageuses qui ont eu l'audace de percer dans cet univers souvent même en publiant des articles savants sous un pseudonyme du fait qu'elles n'étaient pas considérées comme pouvant être à la hauteur de telles productions de connaissance. Nous sommes les héritières de toutes ces femmes dont les connaissances autochtones furent déniées et qui continuent d'être marginalisées.

Nous sommes vos héritières, vous, les femmes noires de tous les horizons, de la diaspora et du continent, qui avez brisé la forteresse du monde académique, pour nous forger une voie. Grâce à votre audace, votre détermination, votre résistance, votre résilience devant le déni de vous reconnaître vos capacités de raisonner comme des êtres humains, vous avez pavé le chemin pour que nous femmes noires et celles des générations à venir puissions être aujourd'hui admises dans cet espace universitaire. Sur vos traces, nous continuons à nous battre pour grimper au sommet de la montagne dans ce *Polis* qui, jadis fut un lieu exclusif aux hommes blancs, lesquels furent rejoints plus tard par les femmes blanches.

Alors que nous célébrons cette journée Internationale des femmes, nous nous inspirons des paroles d'Harriet Tubman de qui l'institut porte le nom. Harriet Tubman disait :

*J'avais franchi la ligne, j'étais libre mais il n'y avait personne pour m'accueillir au pays de la liberté. J'étais l'étrangère dans un pays étranger.*

*(...) . Ne vous arrêtez pas. Continuez. Si vous voulez goûter à la liberté, continuez.*

Nous, les femmes de tous les continents, avons franchi la ligne et nous sommes arrivées dans l'univers académique, bastion des productions des connaissances, quoique nous y soyons à la marge.

Continuons à combattre afin que nous puissions parvenir à la réalisation de l'inclusion de toutes les voix qui sont étouffées, ignorées, marginalisées pour qu'elles soient entendues afin que nous contribuions à la création d'un espace universitaire qui reconnaît la diversité des connaissances et notre l'humanité.

#### Bonne journée internationale des femmes!

**Gertrude Mianda, Directrice de l'institut Harriet Tubman.  
Professeure en études sur le genre et les femmes, Glendon**

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**Dr. Sylvia Bawa**  
Associate Professor, Sociology, York University

## Reflections on International Women's Day as an African Woman in Academia

This is the first time I am reflecting on this question, in this specific way. Mostly, I commemorate the day as one of celebrating partial victories for women's rights all around the world and remembering histories of denial, exclusion, and marginalization for women. As an African woman in the academy, I cannot help but think about the sacrifices of the some of the first black women in academia. I imagine the isolation, loneliness, and marginalization they endured. However, more importantly, I celebrate their tenacity in staying to open doors for me and others like me. I am moved by their sacrifice to do my bit, and then some, to make the academy a welcoming space for those yet to come. I carry their dreams in working for liberatory spaces within the academy to ensure that we can all thrive in a space that was not made for us. I don't ask for the proverbial seat, nor for an extension of that table. I am here, with more than one seat. My entry into this space is a crack into the sky of the institution, under which we will shelter, build and regenerate. We are here, not to just to stay, but to transform. Like fungi, we reverberate the life our forebears gave so that we might be; we are an extension of their life-worlds, generating knowledge and pushing boundaries as mycelium can.



**Ruth Rodney, RN, PhD**  
Assistant Professor, School of Nursing, Faculty of Health, York University

For me, this day is a symbol of the ongoing and often invisible work that we, as Black women, engage in to ensure that our families and communities can thrive and do so with joy! Days such as these provide us with a reminder to celebrate our achievements, no matter how great or how small, and to remember that each other's wins are also our own. I am always inspired and deeply moved when I learn about the work that Black women are doing within our communities. Learning about and learning from other Black women is often the motivation I need to keep going on those tough and challenging days. In the spirit of this year's theme, #EmbraceEquity, I want to use this platform to encourage readers to support the Board of Health Restructuring in Hamilton, Ontario! Currently, the Board of Health is comprised solely of city councillors and there are no healthcare providers on the board. Changing the Board membership to include healthcare providers from equity deserving communities embraces equity by changing the governance structure of a municipal government committee. Join myself and others in supporting this cause with the link provided. <https://hcci.ca/healthequityhamont2023/>

**In Solidarity,**  
Ruth Rodney, RN, PhD

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**Vivien Bediako**

**Ph.D. candidate in the Graduate program in Geography at the Faculty of Environment and Urban Change, York University**

International Women's Day is marked every year on March 8 to celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of women worldwide. This year, as we celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women, I wish to take a moment to reflect on what this year's theme 'Embrace Equity' really means to me. As a Black woman pursuing higher education in the academy, I am keenly aware that Black women and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students continue to face situations of systemic and structural barriers, microaggression, and unconscious bias in several academic spaces.

Equity is a must-have we can all truly embrace. True equity must facilitate Black women's access to higher education to foster their sense of belonging, and to open up opportunities for them not only to survive but, indeed, to thrive in the academy. Accordingly, there is an urgent need to understand, prioritize, and acknowledge diversity in our backgrounds, identities, and experiences, and thus, help bring us all together to make the academy a better place for knowledge production and sharing.

I am happy to see that York University is taking great strides in building a respectful and inclusive relationship with its Black community, right from faculty to the levels of students and staff. It is my hope that by embracing equity, equitable opportunities can be created for all aspiring to be in the Canadian academy.

I take this opportunity to wish all the phenomenal women academics a Happy International Women's Day! Let's keep soaring and shining!

#IWD2023, #EqualityForAll, #EmbraceEquity, #HTI, #YorkU



**Amarachi Chukwu**

**Ph.D. Student, Graduate Program in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies**

As a Black African woman in academia, international women's day is a palpable reminder of the centrality of solidarity and intersectionality in achieving our liberation.

I am reminded that our experiences are varied but our freedoms from patriarchy and other interwoven systems of oppression are interdependent.

The power we have in dismantling the patriarchy is rooted in a refusal of individualist, exclusionary, narrow perspectives of freedom and an acceptance of expansive, transnational, coalitional approaches that considers all women globally in its imagination of a just and equitable future.

International women's day allows us to complicate the division of here and there, of us and them and insist on solidarity as central to our praxis. It's a day where we all reiterate the fact that the experiences of women in historically over-exploited nations, Black women, Indigenous women, racialized women, trans women, poor women, queer women, incarcerated women etc. are all important in the feminist pursuit for women's liberation.



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**Aatika Francis**

**M.A. Student, School of Arts, Media, Performance and Design**

When I think of what International Women’s Day means to me a series of images passes through my mind. These are images of the Black women that came before me, my mother, my grandmother, my aunts, and then I think of the Black women after me like my younger cousins, my nieces, my friends. This day is for the recognition of the strong Black women within my life that have grounded the way I am as a Black woman in Canada. Even though International Women’s Day is only one day out of the year there is not a day that goes by where we do not feel our gender or race. I am a Black woman living in a world built to keep our voices from being heard. International Women’s Day means strength, resistance, and screaming our worth loud enough for everyone to hear.



**Shanique Mothersill**

**PhD. Researcher, Graduate Program in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies**

**Never a Flatline: A Poem About International Women’s Day**

Listen! For the rhythm, a pulsating rhythmic roar  
From the chest where women’s movements, advocacy and  
resistance beat  
Around the heart- BLACK feminist heart  
Surrounded by African women chanting upon the fire of-  
BLOOD that runs TRANSNATIONALLY through the  
Veins of Caribbean women singing to the toes and the hands  
Lifting to the dance of the chest

Never a flatline! Feminists everywhere breathing...breathing...  
breathing

Freedom-every breath, a beep-  
Toward more freedoms-packing the lungs with scholarship, art,  
work-

**THE LABOUR OF WOMEN**

In the global South intertwining muscles and tendons and arteries  
with the global North

Bone to bone, tackling internal hierarchies-

**NO BONE ABOVE, NO BONE BELOW**

Feel the Skin! In its many shades and hues

As they inhale, purify and exhale for all the little girls

LGBTQ++ girls- the hair that beautifies and strengthens the flow-

Of water through the day-International Women’s Day

The brain that turns women’s pain into medicine-

a warmth-

To the spine- to the womb-to the breast-to the soul

Never a flatline!

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**Ify Okadigbo**

**Ph.D. Researcher-School of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies**

International Women's Day provides a great opportunity to take stock of all the amazing Black women we encounter particularly in the academy. The incredible women that have invested their time, provided a shoulder to cry on, shared resources and insights, and offered advice. As a Black African immigrant woman in the academy, I am standing on the strong and reliable shoulders of those who have come before me. They laid a path for me, a young woman from Sub-Saharan Africa to dream, aspire and dare. Regardless of all the multiple layers of challenges Black women face, including racism and all the other "isms" and biases, the constant resistance and rejection of the Black female being as a site of knowledge, the lack of mentorship, the continuous felling of imposter syndrome, the lack of representation, recognition and acknowledgement of our unique contributions, we continue to provide a way forward for ourselves and those that will come after us. As Black women in the academy, we continue to disrupt and challenge the status quo that questions the intellect of the Black woman. We are reminded that the journey remains tenuous, but we are united with our sistah scholars in ensuring that Black women will continue to be recognized as fountains of scholarship.

We belong, we are valued, our contributions matter, we are knowledge producers, we are intellectual, and we are here to stay!

Happy international Women's Day!



**Jellisa Ricketts**

**Ph.D. Student, Graduate Program in Social and Political Thought**

International Women's Day always makes me think about the story of women in my family. A story that is, indeed, international. For generations my family has always been anchored by a matriarch. I've always thought of my mother, her mother, and my great-grandmother as alchemists. Their lives each involve unique circumstances of travel, perseverance and sacrifice where they have managed to cross through barriers, both systemic and interpersonal, seemingly by magic.

It is because of them that I am privileged to be a Black woman in academia today. So, on this International Women's Day I am thinking of the Black women who helped shape the woman that I am and that many of us are, and that we will be. Thank you for your selflessness. Thank you for your community. Thank you for your endless love.

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International Women's Day is more than just a day to celebrate women; instead, it is a moment to stop and appreciate women while remembering and acknowledging the contributors for strides made, and not just focus on the work ahead. Especially as it relates to Black women, because historically and even in contemporary society, many Black women face intersections of barriers that prohibit them from actualizing their fullest potential. Historically, persons that looked like me were not allowed into academic spaces, but as a Black woman today, because of the sacrifices of my ancestors, I can now step into these spaces that were not created for me as a critical and conscious thinker, to learn and unlearn harmful stereotypes, while diligently researching and engaging with community.

International Women's Day is a constant reminder that we must continue to work on change and are essential, no matter the day of the year. I stand as a representation for those to come while also being a reflection of those before me, continuing to work on change, letting Black women know that glass ceilings were meant to be broken and that they matter too.

Happy International Women's Day, remember to be kind to yourself today and always.



**Kay Tracey**

**Ph.D. Student, Graduate Program in Social and Political  
Thought**