

# Presenter's Biography

## *Mazin Aribi*



Mazin is a serious and passionate advocate for accessible transit, Mazin has been involved with the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) in various volunteer positions for nearly 20 years. Mazin has worked to further the transit options of individuals with varying abilities. He has strong knowledge of the TTC and Wheel-Trans system, and has served as Vice Chair and Chair of the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit at the TTC, where he performed system audits for accessibility and helped to develop plans to improve existing services in both Wheel-Trans and conventional service. Mazin is a community advocate and he is one of the founding members of the Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO), a non-profit organization that addresses the needs and issues of ethno-racial people with disabilities. At ERDCO, he was involved in making a documentary video about newcomers with disabilities coming to Canada.

## *Selvamanikam (Bhrapa) Bhrapakaran*



Bhrapakaran was born with perfect sight in both eyes in Jaffna Sri Lanka. He lost the sight of the vision in his left eye at the age of three to optic nerve problem and the right eye when he was ten with retinal detachment due to an accident while playing. He continued his education under

the integrated educational program (in Canada we call it “mainstream schooling”) in Colombo. He entered University of Jaffna and finished his bachelor’s degree with honours.

Then he was employed as a graduate management trainee under northeast provincial council and sat the SL.A.S. (Sri Lanka administrative service) examination and was ranked second amongst all the candidates thus becoming the first person with disability to pass the SL.A.S.

Bhrapa moved to Canada in 1997 and gained employment with Scotiabank thus becoming the first person with vision loss to be employed in the bank's call centre environment and has been with the bank for 20 years. Bhrapa held the positions of director and Vice-Chair of SUA (scotiabankers for universal access) now known as ScotiabankersDiversibility, which is an employee resource group in Scotiabank, looking after the welfare and accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities.

He is one of the founding members of ATI, a cross disability organization engaging and empowering Canadian Tamils with Disabilities and their caregivers to realize their potential and achieve their goals. He is also a founding member of OCTD (organization of Canadian Tamils with Disabilities), an organization that engages in peer support, raises awareness of the needs of people with disabilities, provides information about services available in the community and finding gainful employment. He has also served as a co-chair of ERDCO (ethno racial people with disabilities coalition of Ontario) and board member of BALANCE for blind adults.

Bhrapa is married to Jotheeswary Bhrapakaran with three wonderful daughters.

### *Yin Brown*



Yin Brown has been an advocate for equal access and opportunities for persons with disabilities since 2009 when she returned to Toronto from teaching abroad. Yin is the Co-Chair of the City of Toronto's Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Project Coordinator for DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN Canada) in Toronto and Hamilton. She is also currently the

Toronto Chapter President of Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians and the Project Director of the Inclusive Employment Advocacy Project funded by the City of Toronto. Previously, Yin has worked at CNIB as the Manager, Advocacy for Ontario, and at CBM Canada as the Advocacy Coordinator. Yin has also served on the Board of the Ontario Council for International Cooperation (OCIC) since 2011. Yin frequently speaks on the intersectionality of disability and gender, race, age, status and other human characteristics, showing disability as a prevalent condition compounded by layers of attitudinal, systemic, and environmental barriers.

### *Tamyka Bullen*



Tamyka Bullen is a Deaf person of colour Queer-identified woman who started her career in the theatrical world along with her 20+ years in social justice advocacy with her performances. She has worked and volunteered at social justice organizations ranging from women to LGBTQA. She brings her advocacy into

her poetry performances at different theatres since 2005 and she became involved in acting recently. She loves to experiment with artistic forms to make shows more interesting such as poetry, dance, singing, mime, etc. Tamyka is continuing to attend different workshops to learn more about feminism, Black Lives Matter, POC issues, Deaf issues, Disability issues and LGBTQA issues to improve her service to marginalized communities.

## *Fiona Cheuk*



PhD Candidate

Social Justice

Ontario Institute of Studies in Education

University of Toronto

Bio: Fiona N. Cheuk is a disabled Asian woman studying Social Justice Education at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education,

at the University of Toronto. Her work examines the connections between ableism, racism, and settler-colonialism in policy making processes regarding accessibility in Canada. Her past political organizing involved disabled student advocacy and issues of access at University of Toronto with Students for Barrier-Free Access (SBA) where she served as chair, and in advocacy and consultation roles with disability focused organizations in the GTA.

## *Jeyasingh David*



Jeyasingh David B.A. (Ceylon) M.E.D. Smith College, USA

David, as he is known, specialized in Education of students who are deaf and blind from Smith College and Boston College. He served as the Principal of the Deaf and Blind School at Kaitadi,

Sri Lanka for 20 years. David was involved in Community Work through the Lions Club and Y's Men's Club in Sri Lanka and helped establish a Cheshire Home for Physically challenged Adults. He later served as the National Director of a German funded Child Care Organization and also served as the National Director of Relief and Rehabilitation under the auspices of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka. In Canada, David first worked with the Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO) as out-reach

coordinator. He also managed the Tamil Caregiver Project at Providence Healthcare from 2002 to 2010. Presently, he is very much involved with the Canadian South Asian Sports and Recreation Organization of the Deaf and also the Organization of Canadian Tamils with Disabilities (OCTD) as a founding member.

### *Leroy Ennis*



Leroy is a Toronto writer and poet. He has been an advocate and volunteer for people with disabilities for many years. He is currently the chair of the Ethno-racial People With Disabilities Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO).

A few years after he immigrated to Canada in 1985, he began writing poems as a hobby. With the encouragement of friends and family he published "Dream In Colour" in 2015. A book of poems filled with a positive, community vibe.

### *Marie-Lison Fougère*



Marie-Lison has more than 25 years of experience in the Ontario Public Service. In December 2015, she was appointed Deputy Minister to the portfolios of Francophone Affairs and Seniors Affairs. Subsequently, she also became Ontario's first Deputy Minister of Accessibility in June 2016. Prior to her most recent appointments, Marie-Lison acted as the Interim Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and

Universities, now known as the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

From 2007 to 2015, Marie-Lison was the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Strategic Policy and Programs Division at the

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. She also served as Assistant Deputy Minister at the Office of Francophone Affairs from 2005 to 2007. Prior to these executive leadership positions, she held different director positions at the Ministry of Education.

Marie-Lison studied political science and German literature at Dalhousie University in Halifax and Heidelberg University in Germany. She holds a Master's degree from York University in Toronto and is fluent in French, English, and German.

### *Rafia Haniff-Cleofas*



Rafia is a community activist and a motivational speaker, who believes ordinary people are capable of extraordinary things when given the opportunity. Her work is guided by the principles of anti-racism, anti-oppression, access, equity and inclusion for all. She is a Founding member of ERDCO Ethno Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario. ERDCO was established in 1993 to advance the social inclusion, rights and diverse voices of racialized people with disabilities. Rafia is also Founding member of CAM-D Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities. CAM-D strives to make the Muslim community inclusive of those with disabilities. Currently, she volunteers with DEEN Support Services to coordinate programs at the Islamic Institute of Toronto. Rafia is also a Founding member of the Canadian Alliance on Race and Disability (CARD). An organization that promotes the intersectionality of race and disability and ensures that the voices of racialized people with disabilities are heard at the national level. Rafia has been recognized for outstanding contribution made to the community and was a recipient of the Community Action Award.

Professionally, Rafia is a Certified Human Resources Professional, she worked as a Supervisor for the Outreach Recruitment Program and later as a Human Resources Consultant with the City of Toronto. She is currently doing her thesis on Islam and Disability for her BA degree in Islamic Studies. She is married and has 2 boys.

### *Sarah Jama*



Sarah Jama is a community organizer from Hamilton, Ontario. She holds a Social Sciences degree from McMaster University. Her lived experiences have fostered interests and a passion for: community engagement, disability justice, and activism.

Sarah has given a variety of keynotes, including for the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), and the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO). She has also been a speaker for a variety of organizations, such as: Start up Fest, The Broadbent Institute, the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Sexual Assault Centre for the Greater Hamilton Area (SACHA), Experience Canada, The Elect more Women Conference, The Canadian Association for the Prevention of

Discrimination and Harassment in Higher Education (CAPDHHE), CBC Radio One, the Ajax Diversity Conference, the Indigenous, Racialized, Migrant and People with Disabilities Solidarity Symposium, and more.

Sarah currently works at the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion as an Outreach Coordinator and is also a Community Engagement Liaison to Councillor Matthew Green at the City of Hamilton. In her spare time, she acts as a consultant, and is currently working with the Hamilton Wentworth District

School Board to create anti-racism training and peer support based curriculum for students at the school board.

### *Rabia Khedr*



Rabia holds a BA from the University of Toronto in Political Science and Industrial Relations and a MA from York University in Critical Disability Studies. Appointed as a Commissioner with the Ontario Human Rights Commission in 2016, Rabia is a founder of the Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities,

CEO of DEEN Support Services and Executive Director of the Muslim Council of Peel. Rabia has served on many boards and committees including the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council of Ontario, Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario, Ontario Women's Health Network and Federation of Muslim Women. As a consultant under her own company, diversityworX, Rabia has provided training, research and consulting services on accessibility, equity and inclusion for numerous organizations including corporations, universities, community agencies and school boards. Rabia has presented at local and international conferences to raise awareness about disability issues, women's rights and Islamophobia and has participated in a number of television broadcasts and documentaries. Rabia has been recognized for her leadership and community contributions and most notably, received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012 and the MAX Woman of the Year in 2017. Rabia is a married, mother of 4 who happens to be blind.

## David Meyers



David Meyers is a disability advocate committed to advancing the social inclusion, rights and equity of persons with disabilities and the broader disability community. Over the past 8 years, he has served as Community Development Manager at Birchmount

Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre, overseeing neighbourhood-based programs, including its *Active and Able Program* which conducts advocacy, civic and peer support programming for persons with disabilities.

David has also promoted the rights of ethno-racialized persons with disabilities. He was Coordinator of *Ethno-racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO)* from 2008-2010. He went on to serve as Chair of its Board of Directors and on the Board of the *Centre for Independent Living - Toronto*.

David works collaboratively with cross-sectoral stakeholders to advance equitable service delivery and public policy that reflect the identity intersectionalities of ethno-racialized people with disabilities, and reduce their lived experience of attitudinal, institutional and racial discrimination.

## Ayshia Musleh



Ayshia Musleh is currently an Accessibility Consultant in the Accessible Learning Services Office, George Brown College. Through her paid and volunteer work, Ayshia has been an advocate and community organizer for over 15 years, working with such organizations and community groups as ERDCO, DAMN

2025 (Disability Action Movement Now!) Mad Pride, Parkdale Community Legal Services and Across Boundaries. Ayshia has been working in the post secondary environment for the past five years as a Accessibility Specialist at McMaster University Office of Human Rights and Equity Services (now Equity and Inclusion office) and since 2016 at George Brown College. Ayshia has a Masters in Critical Disability Studies from York University.

### *Susan Picarello*



Susan Picarello is the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Accessibility Policy, Employment Strategy and Outreach Division, as such; she is responsible for public education, outreach and strategic partnerships regarding accessibility and for leading the coordinated implementation of the Provincial

Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities, as well as establishing the Ontario Government as a leading employer and change agent. During her over 25 years with the Ontario Public Service, Susan has held various key senior level positions in legislative, policy and program development and operations including Cabinet Health and Education Policy.

Since 2010 Susan was the Director of the Assistive Device Program at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care where she led a comprehensive transformation of the Program, working with both the business and disability sectors to improve service quality while ensuring value for money for the government.

Susan also has experience in the mental health field and from 2012 to 2014 concurrent with her ADP responsibilities, Susan was Director of the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office. She

holds a Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Political Science from the University of Toronto.

### *Margaret Sanderson*



Margaret Sanderson, M.A., Manager, Diversity and Inclusion, Sheridan College  
Margaret Sanderson is the Manager of Diversity and Inclusion in the Centre for Equity and Inclusion at Sheridan where she works to remove barriers, build awareness and foster an inclusive, welcoming, and supportive environment for all employees, students, and members of the public. She is an experienced practitioner who has devoted her professional career to accessibility, inclusion, and community development work with a public sector career that began with the Community Services Department of the City of Kitchener. Upon completion of her M.A. in Planning from the University of Waterloo in 2006, Margaret moved to the Niagara region and held the position of Brock University Accessibility Coordinator within the Office of the Vice- Provost and Associate Vice-President, Student Services until 2014. At this time Margaret joined Sheridan undertaking planning and leadership within the areas of accessibility, gender and sexual diversity and equity and inclusion. Margaret is currently a member of the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals and the Canadian Association for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination in Higher Education. As a person with the lived experience of physical disability, a woman, a child of immigrants to Canada, having headed up a lone/single parent family of two boys, and now experiencing aging with a disability, Margaret has come to understand the intersectionality of her identities, including the privilege associated with being a white person, how this privilege has impacted her and contributed to shaping her personal and professional journey.

## *Aseefa Sarang*



Aseefa is the Executive Director of Across Boundaries: An Ethnoracial Mental Health Centre, a unique organization that provides mental health and addictions services for racialized communities in Toronto. These services are centered in equitable, holistic, anti-racism/anti-oppression and resisting Anti-Black racism frameworks.

Aseefa has been working in the field of mental health for over 20 years. Her experiences and interests are in programming for adults, youth, and family, who intersect with various systems (criminal justice, homelessness, immigration, research etc) and she is committed to systemic change through advocacy.

Aseefa has served on various boards and committees, local and provincial, including the Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Local Advisory Council for Legal Aid Ontario, member of the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council of the Ministry of Health and board member of Connex Ontario.

Aseefa volunteers as a mediator in her spare time, both workplace and individual, and has recently completed her MA at University of Guelph.

## *Meenu Sikand*



Founder of the AfA (Accessibility for All), MeenuSikand is a resident of Vaughan for the past 18 years. She brings 30 years of personal and professional experience advancing the disability agenda nationally and globally. as she knows firsthand what it's like to have a disability and accessibility barriers, she has a particular passion to improve the employment situation of WWD (Women with Disabilities).

Under her leadership, AfA focuses on public education campaigns to raise disability and diversity awareness, human rights and AODA, training and development of multi-year Accessibility Plans and accessibility policies for government, NGOs and the private sector to remove accessibility barriers strategically. In 2017, Meenu actively contributed with her expertise in the renewal of Canada's National action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2017-2022 launched on November 1, 2017. Hon. Tracy McCharles, Ontario's Minister of Accessibility, appointed Meenu on her Accessibility Standards Advisory Council in September, 2017. Meenu Sikand, has been working as an accessibility planning specialist for a Regional government and a trainer for the Queen's University International Centre for the Advancement of Community Based Rehabilitation (ICACBR) program. Meenu is an alumnus of Mobility International USA's (MIUSA) first batch of the Women's Institute on Leadership and Disability program and holds a Master's degree in Critical Disabilities Studies from York University.