



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2023  
**2023 Online Forum**

# RECLAIMING RITUALS

HONORING ANCESTORS, IMPACTING COMMUNITIES  
Indigenizing Mental Health & Wellness in the Global Diaspora

## SPEAKERS



**Yaseen Ally, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor, Psychology  
Nelson Mandela University, South Africa



**Daniel José Gaztambide, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor, Psychology  
Queens College, CUNY, NYC



[www.ancestralinstitute.org](http://www.ancestralinstitute.org)

# Welcome

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October 28, 2023

Greetings!  
Community Members,

To you, attending our continuing Ancestral Institute, with the theme, “**Reclaiming Rituals: Honoring Ancestors, Impacting Communities**”, and with the sub-theme, “*Indigenizing Mental Health and Wellness in the Global Diaspora*”; we extend a hearty **WELCOME!**

Recognizing the title and theme’s importance, we return with the Institute’s second edition, picking up from where we left off in 2022. In this edition, we look at storytelling’s value, birth and postpartum doulas, herbalism, rites and rituals; and Indigenous herbs and medicines, and discuss rites of passage. Our two main Speakers, Prof. Yaseen Ally from the Nelson Mandela University in South Africa and Prof. Daniel Jose Gaztambide at Queens College in the City University of New York, will share perspectives to assist our understanding of the role of ancestral/traditional and Indigenous rites, rituals and practices to healing our minds. Theater of War Productions will provide an online performance of “**Tiresias**”, excerpted from Sophocles’ 2500-year-old play “Oedipus Rex”, which recounts the story of a “shaman” and transgender person who was consulted and whose prophecies were ignored.

The Institute’s founding members, who are also planning team members, share their thoughts on this year’s forum:

“Being part of the planning committee allows me to connect with like-minded individuals who are committed to highlighting and reclaiming our rituals and traditions as Black, Indigenous, Peoples of Color and are working to challenge White supremacy culture within our respective fields. I hope that attendees are able to find a collective healing space that allows for growth and healing.” - Adjoa Osei, Psy.D.

“Participating in the planning for AI-23 was an eye-opening experience for me, as it encouraged me to become more sensitive and educated about the mental health of the BIPOC Community. AI-23’s goals are to address the lack of information on mental health, to provide well-documented research, to unlearn misinformation, and to use dormant knowledge to its full potential in our communities. I hope that this event will serve as a wake-

up call for attendees to take charge of their mental health and to recognize the power of Indigenous knowledge, practices, and rituals. By doing so, we can leave a legacy that will be felt for many generations to come.” - Dr. Yaa Elombe (Black Women’s Blueprint and BOUJONNEN Nascent Foundation Inc.).

Among the Institute’s many aims is an intent to design a curriculum with training modules that incorporate ancestral and traditional healing practices which can be taught in high schools, colleges and in mental health clinician training courses; part of the curriculum is research into the gaps in academic literature on mental illness, wellness and care in Indigenous, Black and peoples of color - whether in the Americas (North, Central, South and the Caribbean), the African continent, Asia and South Asia, and the Australis and Pacifica regions (Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Islands).

This forum is possible: our planning team, who believed in the Institute’s purpose and its transformative potential, and our Speakers and Presenters; and our Sponsors. **THANK YOU!**

We trust your experience today would inspire you to engage or continue connecting with your ancestors, visiting/revisiting your familial histories as you progress in your healing.

**WELCOME!**

Conference Planning Team  
AI-23

# Preparations for the FORUM

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## **SPEAKER/PRESENTER**

- Mute Your Microphone
  - To help keep background noise to a minimum, make sure you mute your microphone when you are not speaking.
  - Be mindful of background noise
  - When your microphone is unmuted, avoid activities that could create additional noise, such as shuffling papers.
  - Position your camera properly
  - If you choose to use a web camera, be sure it is in a stable position and focused at eye level, if possible. Doing so helps create a more direct sense of engagement with other participants.
  - Limit distractions
  - You can make it easier to focus on the meeting by turning off notifications, closing or minimizing running apps, and muting your smartphone.
  - Avoid multitasking
  - You'll retain the discussion better if you refrain from replying to emails or text messages during the meeting and wait to work on that PowerPoint presentation until after the meeting ends.

## **MEETING ETIQUETTE**

These are some general courtesy rules for virtual (and in person) business meetings:

- Respect other participants and the presenter, even if you disagree with something they say.
- The Conference's General Sessions will be recorded and live-streamed. The Breakout sessions will not be recorded. Please DO NOT record in the breakout sessions and DO NOT take photographs or screenshots.
- Mute your mic when you join the video call, and only unmute if you are invited by the presenter to do so; share your comments or questions in the chat box.
- Toward the end of breakout sessions, in the 15 minutes for Q&A, an evaluation link will be shared with you in the chat box for you to complete and submit.
- If you can, hold off on eating during your meeting. Imagine how unappealing it is to watch someone up close slurping a plate of spaghetti on a big screen. If you can, chow down either before or when the conference is over.

# Preparations for the FORUM (continued)



- Even though it's tempting, try not to multitask too much. And if you're going to, at least mute your mic.
- You don't have to be overly prepared for a meeting you're not hosting, but try to be on time; glancing at the conference program so you know where we are.
- Refrain from private behavior – such as, scratching your armpits, your head or face, and picking your nose. We can see you!

LET'S ENJOY THIS OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND COLLABORATE, TO SHARE IDEAS AND PRACTICAL WAYS TO MAKE LIFE BETTER FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLES OF COLOR LIVING WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES.





## PROGRAM OPENING

### Native American Ancestral Invocation

presented by **Jason Hasana-Cofield** (Shinnecock Nation) and **Chief Fasanmi Fayemi** (Healing Arts)



## “WE REMEMBER OUR OWN” - A MEMORIAL

Remembering, honoring, and celebrating community members who died by homicide, suicide or from the COVID-19 pandemic between October 2022 and October 2023.

### Speaker: Rituals, Rites and the Urbanisation of Psychology

presented by **Yaseen Ally, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor, Psychology, Nelson Mandela University, South Africa



One of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, as experienced in South Africa, was a re-conscientization toward the role culture and tradition plays in daily life and living. On the one hand, there was an acknowledgment gained through the lockdown, that as humans, we are inextricably linked to forces and factors that make the human experience plausible. The lockdown took away from us, not only our ability to interact and socialize with each other, but it also made us realize that the rituals and ceremonies that are a part of our cultures and traditions, give deeper meaning to our lives.

Honoring the ancestors is upheld in religions and cultures across the world, and embedded with rituals and rites of passage that must be adhered to. In many instances, religious-cultural beliefs synthesize or overlap, creating a mutual influence on the person. These religious-cultural rituals are symbolic and important for the living, but they are also equally important for the dead. In this presentation, I unpack the theme of the conference “reclaiming rituals” and locate this idea within the contexts of research I carried out, on the role of traditional healing, rituals and rites on the psychological well-being of individuals and communities. I argue that without a deepened acknowledgement of and incorporation of rituals, rites and ancestors into the domain of what mental health is constructed as, psychological services will remain an urbanized science, muted to the needs of the African psyche.



### Lunch Time Presentation: *Tiresias*

an excerpt from *Oedipus Rex* - presented by **Theater of War Productions** with actors: Ato Blankson-Wood and NYC Public Advocate, Jumaane Williams



In this offering to the Ancestral Institute, Theater of War Productions will present acclaimed actors performing a live scene from Sophocles' 2,500-year-old play "Oedipus the King" to help frame a powerful discussion about timeless themes, such as arrogant leadership, ignored prophecy, intergenerational trauma, and the human capacity for denial. The scene will feature the blind-seer Tiresias, an ancient Greek shaman who gained the gift of prophecy after transitioning gender. In the scene, Tiresias faces off with an arrogant king (Oedipus), who publicly dismisses his gifts and ignores his prophecy about the source of a plague that is ravaging the archaic city of Thebes. Following the scene, a group of AI community panelists will offer their immediate gut responses to the scene, and the session will culminate in a guided audience discussion about how the myth of Tiresias resonates across time and culture with AI members today.

### We Been Here From The Beginning: Recovering Ab-Original Psychoanalysis, and Indigenous Healing

presented by **Daniel José Gaztambide, PsyD**, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Queens College, CUNY, NYC



Decolonial, indigenous approaches to psychology are often derided as a recent invention. This erases not only ancestral, indigenous sources of healing, but also erases the rich and vibrant tradition of scholars and clinicians critically reinventing psychology from their distinct locations and cultures throughout the global south. This presentation will review the history of decolonial psychoanalysis, and its synthesis of psychological theory and indigenous practices throughout East Asia, India, Africa, and Latin America. Including contributions from the Black Radical Tradition, we uncover a chorus of voices grounding individual healing in communal and political transformation, a tradition that has stood the test of time through survival, resistance, and resilience.

# Schedule



OCTOBER 28, 2023

Time	Activity   Presenter(s)
10:00 AM	<p><b>Call to Order</b> Planning Team Member</p> <p><b>Libation (Indigenous, African)</b> Jason Hasana-Cofield (Shinnecock Nation) and Chief Fasanmi Fayemi (Healing Arts)</p> <p><b>Welcome</b> Planning Team Member</p> <p><b>“We Remember Our Own” - A Memorial</b> Planning Team Member</p>
10:30 AM	<p><b>Rituals, Rites and the Urbanisation of Psychology</b> Yaseen Ally, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Psychology Nelson Mandela University, South Africa</p>
<b>11:15 AM</b>	<b>BREAKOUT Session 1</b>
	<p><b>B1-A</b> - <i>Spiritual herbalism, the ways in which herbs are used for healing; community discussions on storytelling</i> Karen Rose (Sacred Vibes Apothecary)</p> <p><b>B1-B</b> - <i>Cultivating Wellness through Ancestral Recognition: The Intergenerational Stories we tell ourselves and how to identify yourself in them!</i> Kendall Johnson-Smith, LCSW, IFOT aka lyFasewa (Fasewa Wellness, LLC)</p> <p><b>B1-C</b> - <i>Understanding Rites of Passage - Boys &amp; Girls</i> Shinnecock Indian Nation</p>
<b>12:30 PM</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
1:00 PM	<p><b>Tiresias</b> - an excerpt from <i>Oedipus Rex</i> - presented by Theater of War Productions with actors: Ato Blankson-Wood and NYC Public Advocate, Jumaane Williams</p>
1:45 PM	<p><b>Reconvene/Welcome</b></p>
1:45 PM	<p><b>We Been Here From The Beginning: Recovering Ab-Original Psychoanalysis, and Indigenous Healing</b> Daniel José Gaztambide, PsyD, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Queens College, CUNY, NYC</p>
<b>2:30 PM</b>	<b>BREAKOUT Session 2</b>
	<p><b>B2 A</b> - <i>“Knowing My Story” - How to elicit/gather stories and how to preserve them?</i> Chief Fasanmi Fayemi (Healing Arts) and Dr. Yaa Elombe (BWB, Inc.)</p> <p><b>B2- B</b> - <i>Sensual Awareness: Exploration into my Human Sensuality</i> Kali</p> <p><b>B2-C</b> - <i>Indigenous Herbs and Medicines</i> Shinnecock Indian Nation</p> <p><b>B2-D</b> - <i>Doula Support: Return to Ancestral Maternal Care</i> Simone Colbert and Ashlee Lyte</p>
3:45 PM	<p><b>Next Year</b> - <i>(amplify conversations, networking/organizations to connect, resources, tools?)</i> Planning Team Member</p>
4:00 PM	<p><b>Closing Invocation</b> Jason Hasana-Cofield (Shinnecock Nation) and Chief Fasanmi Fayemi (Healing Arts)</p>
	<b>END</b>

# Presentation Descriptions



**10:30 AM**     **Rituals, Rites and the Urbanisation of Psychology**  
*presented by Yaseen Ally, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Psychology Nelson Mandela University, South Africa*

## **11:15 AM**     **BREAKOUT Session 1**

**B1-A: Spiritual herbalism, the ways in which herbs are used for healing; community discussions on storytelling**

*presented by Karen Rose (Sacred Vibes Apothecary)*

Empress Karen Rose will uplift the rich history diasporic people have with our ancestral lands, traditions, and medicine. From speaking of her experience with her grandparents, as her first plant medicine teachers, she will highlight our innate connection to the plants we grew in our ancestral lands across the Diaspora. In addition, this Masterclass will highlight the powerful medicines we currently have in our kitchens. Empress Karen will share a quick and timely medicinal remedy for nourishing our immune and nervous systems throughout the winter months.

**B1-B: Cultivating Wellness through Ancestral Recognition: The Intergenerational Stories we tell ourselves and how to identify yourself in them**

*presented by Iya Fasewa (Fasewa Wellness, LLC)*

In this workshop, participants will engage in guided activities that are based in Indigenous concepts, that will support the participants. Ancestor recognition can help a person understand how their brain and nervous system functions, how it impacts their behavior, and how to support oneself in managing their own responses to stress; learn how to build a conversation and curiosity with one's trauma so that it is open to tools; learn how Ancestor recognition can help a person maintain a baseline of calm wellness and respond to behaviors in ways that get them back on track. We will focus on Indigenous concepts, somatic and implicit explorations, identifying one's Sources of Wellness, and how to bring these concepts into a comprehensive wellness practice

**B1-C: Understanding Rites of Passage - Boys & Girls**

*presented by the Shinnecock Indian Nation*

## **12:30 PM**     **LUNCH**

**1:00 PM**     **Tiresias: an excerpt from Oedipus Rex**  
*presented by Theater of War Productions with actors: Ato Blankson-Wood and NYC Public Advocate, Jumaane Williams*

**1:45 PM**     **Reconvene/Welcome**

**1:45 PM**     **We Been Here From The Beginning: Recovering Ab-Original Psychoanalysis, and Indigenous Healing**  
*presented by Professor Daniel José Gaztambide, PsyD, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Queens College (CUNY, NYC)*



# Presentation Descriptions (continued)



2:30 PM **BREAKOUT Session 2 (Various Rooms) – 2:45 PM**

**B2-A: “Knowing My Story” - How to elicit/gather stories and how to preserve them?**

*presented by Chief Fasanmi (Creative Healing Arts) and Dr. Yaa Elombe (Black Women’s Blueprint)*

This presentation will explore the journey of remembering, composing, gathering and telling our stories as essential to understanding our history, culture and ourselves. Through oral and written folklore history passed down from generation to generation, we learn about our ancestors, and about lores (stories), practices, hygiene, cooking, victories, legacies, migration, struggles, relationship navigation, traditional medicines, and of belonging, which are essential tools to forming healthy identities, a self-determining person, and collective futures; as the 20th century revolutionary, Marcus Garvey, said, “A people without knowledge of their history is like a tree without roots”.

**B2-B: Indigenous Herbs and Medicines**

*presented by Shinnecock Indian Nation*

**B2-C: Sensual Awareness: Exploration into my Human Sensuality**

*presented by Kali*

You are invited to an exploration that honors self-discovery and the subtle power of sensuality. Recognising the importance of supporting our often-invisible community members who face unique challenges related to different aspects of well-being and neurodiversity, this is a space of inquiry into the body and the relationship to this vessel. This captivating event invites individuals to explore the light yet rich world of sensuality and its potential for personal growth. Through a thoughtfully curated journey, we aim to create a space where participants can fully embrace their senses, enhance body awareness, and nurture self-expression. Our facilitator, Kali will guide you into practices that cater to the needs and preferences of attendees. Together, we will explore the profound connection between sensuality, emotions, and self-care, fostering a deeper understanding of one’s unique journey. By embracing mindful sensuality, participants will cultivate a sense of sensual empowerment and experience beneficial tools to navigate their daily life with more mindfulness.

**B2-D: Doula Support: Return to Ancestral Maternal Care**

*presented by Simone Colbert and Ashlee Lyte*

Bringing awareness to the maternal health crisis; how doula support bridges the gap using ancestral practice and skill sets to increase maternal and familial health outcomes.

**3:45 PM** **Next Year** - (amplify conversations, networking/organizations to connect, resources, tools?)  
Planning Team Member

**4:00 PM** **Indigenous/Native American Closing Invocation**  
*presented by Jason Hansana-Cofield (Shinnecock Indian Nation)*

**END**

# Acknowledgements

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## CONFERENCE PLANNING TEAM

Adjoa Osei, Psy. D.

Dr. Yaa Elombe, BWB, Inc.

Erwin E. A. Thomas, MA / Chief Fasanmi Fayemi

Antoine Craigwell, DBGM, inc.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Healing Arts Creative

Beyond Bold and Brave

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**CONFERENCE WEBSITE 2023 UPDATE**  
Vaughn Constable (TwistByVee)

**GRAPHIC DESIGN**  
Erick Taylor Woodby



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