

Courage to Act National Skillshare - Skillshare Launch in Conversation with Eternity Martis

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>> Kelly Prevett: Hello, everyone, and welcome to the launch of the National Skillshare Series on Addressing and Preventing Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada. My name is Kelly Prevett and I'm the Programming Coordinator of Courage to Act. We're thrilled to welcome you to the launch of the first skillshare session today. Before we begin, just a quick note on language and accessibility. Attendees can turn on and off captioning in zoom as needed by clicking closed captioning in the controls bar at the bottom of your screen. You can also listen to the session in French by selecting the French language channel using the interpretation menu.

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.

Just a little bit about the National Skillshare. A key feature of our project is the National Skillshare Series where our Working Groups, Communities of Practice, and keynote speakers will discuss tools, trends, and strategies that will shape how we address and prevent gender-based violence on campus. Attendees will join a connected network of experts and advocates across Canada who are exploring urgent issues and promising practices. Supported by CACUSS, these skillshare sessions are also a recognized learning opportunity. Attendance at ten or more live webinars in our National Skillshare Series will count towards an online certificate.

Throughout the National Skillshare Series we'll be sharing with you the tools and resources created by over 150 Courage to Act experts and thought leaders from across the country working together to bring together a harmonized framework to address and prevent gender-based violence at post-secondary institutions in Canada. I'd like to begin today's webinar by acknowledging that this work is taking place on and across the traditional territories many Indigenous nations. We recognize that gender-based violence is just one form of violence caused by colonization to marginalize and dispossess Indigenous peoples from their lands and 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.

Our project is made possible through generous support and funding from the Department of Women and Gender Equality or WAGE, Federal Government of Canada. Here to say a few words on behalf of Minister Monsef and WAGE is Parliamentary Secretary Gudie Hutchings. Gudie became a member of Parliament for the riding of Long Range Mountains in October of 2015. With her strong community ties, varied business experience and commitment to Newfoundland and Labrador, she was appointed by Prime Minister Trudeau as Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism in 2015, and later served on the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. In 2019 she was appointed Parliamentary Secretary of Women And Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development. Thank you Gudie for joining us.

>> Gudie Hutchings: Kelly thanks so much for that warm welcome and happy New Year all. It's great to be here with you today and it's great to be here on behalf of the Honourable Maryam Monsef. the minister for women and gender equality and wage. or rural economic development, or WAGE and RED as we refer to it. Before we begin I want to reflect back on what you said Kelly. I'm proud to be here standing on the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people. Each one of us on-line are gathering from some traditional territory across First Nations whether it's Inuit and or Metis people. So be sure to remember that in everything you do. I also want to say thank you to you and your group to Possibility Seeds and the Courage to Act team for inviting me to speak to you and listen to your perspectives that are going to be shared today. We're here to talk about such an important topic and sadly it continues to impact far too many places across our country, which is gender-based violence at post-secondary institutions. We're living in a much different world than we were when the government of Canada first funded the Courage to Act project back in 2019. We all know this terrible pandemic, COVID-19 has impacted everyone's day-to-day life, including how we work and study, people we see, and how we connect with our loved ones. The holiday season we've just finished, certainly has been different for many of us, me included. But it's threatened to turn back the clock on all the great work that's been done on gender equality, on economic security, and all the efforts to end gender-based violence. The pandemic has shown so many vulnerabilities and exposed the gaps in our system that touch the lives of women and girls and survivors and their families.

In particular, sadly again we've seen the rates increase and more severe gender-based violence. But throughout all this I want you to know that our response to the pandemic, to the crisis, was informed by a feminist and intersectional analysis that was put on everything because we wanted to ensure that the supports were going to people that needed it most, especially those affected by gender-based violence. We took quick action and supported organizations and we provided funding to those helping with frontline services to those experiencing gender-based violence. We gave over \$100 million to a thousand organizations to ensure that they could keep their doors open and continue the great life saving work that they do.

We know that the students and the youth are among those most affected and terribly impacted at this time. They have been affected academically, financially, and psychologically. Many of

you are doing courses from home. Your pocket books have certainly been impacted and this is hard on everyone's head, especially students. All across the country we continue to see far too many students impacted by HBV harassment, and sexual assault.

It remains far too prevalent, and it impacts all women and LGBTQ students disproportionately as we've said. According to 2018 data, one in ten women students in our provinces and territories were sexually assaulted in a post-secondary setting. That's approximately 110,000 female students who were assaulted, and among students, 45% of women, and 32% of men personally experienced unwanted behaviours in a post-secondary setting, on or off campus. About one in three lesbian, gay, or bisexual students, and four in ten transgender students experience such terrible discrimination. Frankly, these numbers are just disgusting.

Even in times of self isolation, unwanted sexual behaviours and discrimination can take place on-line and on electronic platforms, including platforms that are meant for learning. These are staggering statistics and it reminds us of the urgency of our work, of your work, and the importance of earning the trust of young people and students.

Sadly, we also know that most students who experience unwanted sexual behaviours do not tend to report them within their institution. Again, according to stats canada, only 8% of female students and 6% of male students who are assaulted spoke about the incident of someone affiliated in their school.

We have got to come together and find a way to change this. Canada's post-secondary students deserve to have the best and most culturally responsive tools and supports we can offer. Furthermore, a lot of work is needed to make sure that students can trust these resources, so they can feel safe to speak about their experiences. However, despite these devastating and sobering trends, there is much reason for optimism. With funding from WAGE, Possibility Seeds and Courage to Act, your teams have been providing support, have been working to support the creation of networks and the development of effective tools to address and prevent gender-based violence. Your important work builds on decades of advocacy and efforts led by the provinces, the territories, and by post-secondary institutions, by activists and of course by students to prevent and address gender-based violence. And since your project began, Possibility Seeds has worked to develop tools and resources for institutions that are large and small, urban and rural, with on and off campus learning. Your team has also established nearly a dozen thematic communities of practice to lead additional efforts. You've connected and convened experts and advocates across the country despite barriers posed by this pandemic. I'm looking forward to hearing so much more from you all today on the progress that the Courage to Act team has made, and the products that you've developed so far including the digital campaigns, webinars, and all the projects led by Communities of Practice. Your work is truly intersectional in the way it elevates diverse voices, including educators, including frontline workers, and including the students who are Indigenous, LGBTQ2, racialized, newcomers and immigrants, as well as those with disabilities. You speak for all. I know there's no such thing as a one size fits all solution to such a complex problem. That's why I look

forward to learning more about the cultural responsive approaches that can be developed for diverse youth and students all across our country. I want to let you know that our government is committed to ending gender-based violence and we've taken strong actions to address it. We're in the midst of developing a national action plan to ensure that anyone facing gender-based violence has reliable and timely access to protection and services no matter who they are and where they live. I've participated with Minister Monsef and others, thousands of people we've spoken to across the country to make sure that this plan is going to work for all Canadians to end GBV. At this part of the work we're shaping inclusive and intersectional gender-based violence prevention approaches and that's going to guide the work around the needs of young people and everyone mentioned. I know many of you have been engaged in the work and I'm grateful for your ongoing support. We're also continuing to invest in transition houses, shelters, and support programs for survivors so those fleeing violence have a safe, warm, welcoming place to turn. At the same time we've taken steps to strengthen our justice system to make it more responsive to the needs of survivors and those impacted by GBV. There's so much more work to be done and we're committed to see it through. As advocates working to prevent and address gender-based violence, we have so much to do to ensure our campuses are safe for each and every person. To do this right, we have to make sure that diverse voices, including women and people of all gender identities and expressions, that you're leading the way. By working together we can help prevent and address GBV and we can create a legacy bigger than any government or any institution alone. We'll create a legacy that will empower women, empower survivors, strengthen families and communities and create lasting change that will benefit each and every one. I'm so looking forward to the conversation. Thanks again for the invitation and stay safe.

>> **Kelly Prevett:** Thank you so much, Gudie. We appreciate you having you here. We know you stepped out of a CAUCUS meeting for us, so thank you. I would like to pause now and invite everyone to take a few deep breaths with me. This work can be challenging. Many of us have stories of survivorship. A gentle reminder here to be attentive to our well-being as we engage in these difficult conversations. You can visit the self care section of our Skillshare web page or visit our shelf-care room by visiting the link in the chat which i think Anoodth will pop in there. You can also follow along on Twitter with the hashing #GBVNationalSkillshare. Before I introduce our speakers, just a quick note on the format. Our speakers will be in conversation for about 35-40 minutes. I invite you to enter any questions or comments into the question and answer box, and together we'll pose the questions at the end. The q & a will happen around the last ten minutes of the webinar. At the end you'll find a link to the evaluation form. This is anonymous. Following the webinar, I'll also e-mail you a copy of the evaluation form and link to the recordings so that you can view the webinar again and share it within your networks. We have four wonderful speakers today who will be sharing their insights and experiences of gender-based violence on campus. i'm so happy to introduce them to you now.

Today we have Farrah Khan who is one of Courage to Act's Co-Directors and has spent two decades working diligently to raise awareness about the connection between equity and gender-based violence through education, resource creation, and project management. She's

the manager of Consent Comes First, Office of Sexual Violence Support and Education at Ryerson University, the founder of Possibility Seeds Consulting, as well as a member of the Government of Canada's Federal Strategy against Gender-Based Violence advisory council. Farrah is the recipient of numerous awards including Toronto Community Foundation's Vital People award.

We also have joining us CJ Rowe who is also Co-Director of the Courage to Act project. Dr. CJ Rowe has worked with organizations developing education campaigns and research projects for 20 years. Presently, CJ is director of Simon Fraser University's Sexual Violence Prevention Office, supporting individuals impacted by sexual violence while creating intervention educational campaigns. CJ will also be leading the creation of the Education Toolkit for this project.

We are so pleased to have a member of our student organizer community of practice, Vatineh Magaji joining us. She is from Thompson, Manitoba, Treaty 5 Territory and now resides in Winnipeg, Treaty 1 Territory where she completed her Bachelor of Science in Genetics at the University of Manitoba. She served two terms as President of Justice for Women in Manitoba from 2018-2020, a student group addressing gender-based violence within the campus and greater community. She continues her advocacy work with involvement in Courage to Act's Student Organizer Community of Practice, with REES student advisory board, and various roles at the Women's Health Clinic.

Last but certainly not least we are thrilled to be joined by Eternity Martis, an award-winning Toronto based journalist. She was a 2017 national magazine awards finalist for best new writer and 2018 winner of the Canadian on-line publishing awards for best investigative article. Her work has appeared in VICE, Huffington Post, The Walrus, Cbc, Hazlitt, The Fader, Salon, and on academic syllabuses around the world. Her work on race and language has influenced media style guide changes across the country. She is the course developer and instructor of Reporting on Race: The Black Community and the Media at Ryerson University, the first of its kind in Canada, and is an adjunct professor in race, gender, sexuality and social justice at UBC in the 2021 journalist-in-residence at UBC. She earned an honours BA and certificate in writing from Western University and an MJ from Ryerson University. In 2020 she was named one of Canada's top 100 most powerful women by Women's Executive Network. Her debut memoir, *They Said This Would Be Fun* is a "Toronto Star", "Globe and Mail", and "Vancouver Sun" best seller. CBC has named Eternity one of six Canadian writers of Black heritage to watch in 2020. The book is one of 20 winning Canadian memoirs to read right now. Pop Sugar named it one of five books about race on college campuses every student should read. It is one of Chapters Indigo's best audiobooks of 2020. The audiobook is named best audiobook of 2020 by Apple and Audible. Recently, it became a finalist for the International Book Awards in the category of autobiography, memoir and social change. As you can see, we have a brilliant lineup today. I'm so excited to turn it over to our presenters.

>> **CJ Rowe:** Hi Kelly. Thanks for setting the stage for our conversation today. Thanks everyone for joining us. In terms of a format, we thought we would have a bit of a conversation with Eternity first because I think, I can say that myself and probably the 110 people who are on this call are really excited to hear a bit more, Eternity, about your work and about the context of the book, if that's okay. And then Farrah, Vat and I will join you in a conversation to have a bit of a broader conversation about the impacts of gender-based violence within our post-secondary settings.

To start it off and to start us off, Eternity, I would love for you to help us ground our conversation today by walking us through really the question of: why was it important for you to write this book? It's very timely and you talk about so many different layers and levels of intersections of violence and sexual violence and gender-based violence. Why was it important for this book to come about?

>> **Eternity Martis:** Well thank you, CJ. And hi, everyone. Really thrilled to be here. So this book has -- I've actually been writing this book for ten years. Ten years before it got published. And the reason was that when I moved to London, Ontario to go to Western, I came here from Toronto. To me as a teenager it was very multicultural. So I went into this experience first really to escape an abusive relationship but also to just move far away from home and try to find myself on my own as an adult. The reason that I needed to write this book was because by the time I got to second year I was already disillusioned, run down and ill from the constant daily racism I was experiencing, but also the sexual racism I was experiencing as a Black woman. I came from a place where I was shy and sheltered and everyone looked like me, to ending up in a place where no one looked like me. All my interactions were about me being Black, a Black woman, what my body was like, presumed assumptions about hypersexuality. This was not just on campus, but nightlife. And if anyone here has gone to Western you know there's not a lot to do besides party. So it would be in bars where you mix in alcohol, it would be on the street, buying groceries someone would say oh, you're cute for a Black girl. Or, we don't have Black people here. So as I started to kind of turn inwards and stop going to class and stop participating and just felt sick all the time, no one back home really believed what I was going through. It wasn't until I was in third and fourth year and I actually met other Black women, other students of colour on campus, that I recognized we are all going through it and no one could understand. But on the other side of that, just about every one of my friends had been sexually assaulted or had been in some sort of violent situation. That was really surprising to me because we never spoke about it and we were talking about it as if I wanted to say something, I wish I could share my story. How would I share that? This was before Black Lives Matter, before Me Too. There weren't a lot of stories about gender-based violence and race. As I graduated from Western it was just two months before Mike Brown was killed in Ferguson, Missouri, and the world just changed. I came to Ryerson to do my Masters of Journalism. We were in an entirely different world. There was the rise of the alt-right and white supremacy and incels. All these issues were coming to the forefront. So it felt important to me to write a book that was my experience and representative of the experiences of everyone I knew and their intersecting identities, but also to reflect what we are currently still going through in the world.

>> **Farrah Khan:** I love that you just summarized -- it's almost like you were future here. You were seeing what was needed, the book that was needed. I talked to a Western alumni recently and she was just like, I think Eternity saw the future of what we needed and created a book that actually would help cultivate a conversation. Your book has created so much of a conversation on campuses and that's one of the reasons we wanted you to be launching the Courage to Act conversations we wanted to see. And I think what's been happening in America and the conversations that have been happening here in Canada too around race, one of the pieces that we kept coming back to, one of the quotes from your book that you said was: "Who is afforded rage? Who are the voices on the frontlines? Who are praised and uplifted? Whose voices are still on the margin scolded and shamed for also wanting the moment to be angry?" Does this quote hit differently now so long after writing your book resonate differently right now with what's happening in the world? And the conversations, both about race and gender-based violence.

>> **Eternity Martis:** In a way I didn't want to be right. When I published the book there was this concern with the publisher that by the time the book came out all of this would be outdated. And with every draft, with every month that goes by, we can tell that it's just reinforced. The ideas in the book are reinforced. So I think, when I said that: Who was afforded rage? Unfortunately nothing has changed but I think that we can see what's happening on Capitol Hill. We know who is afforded rage now. And we know it's white men and angry men. And we also know, even though to a lesser extent people want to acknowledge it, that white men who are part of far right movements, white extremism have committed the most amount of mass murders since 9/11. It's not us, right. It's not immigrants. So I think that we're still having the same conversations even when you look at how the police handled the protests on Capitol Hill versus Black people wanting better for Black people. So it's a really -- it's really disappointing to see but at the same time I'm kind of happy because I spent so long trying to tell people: this is what it is. And being told: you're starting a race war. Not severing about race. Why are you saying this? It's divisive. And we're seeing the true meaning of who is afforded rage in this moment, especially.

>> **Farrah Khan:** I can't thank you enough for having that piece in that book to give us the language that we needed to talk about it. Because I feel like sometimes we don't even get to have an understanding of who is allowed to be angry about this. In terms of even students being told, Black students, students of colour, Indigenous students being told: you know, you're overreacting about this conversation. Or survivors being told: you know what, it's not as bad as you think. And what I think you named in the book multiple times is it actually is worse than what has been said.

>> **Eternity Martis:** Absolutely. And I think it's worse also because when you come to university there's this assumption that you're here to have fun. You're here to have the time of your life. We don't make mistakes, nothing bad will happen to us. And there are so many things happening to this generation. We are cyber stalked, more than other age groups. Intimate partner violence is most common among young women 15-24. Young Black and brown men are carded. There's so many different things. It's a generation of growing up in school

shootings. So all these things that we dismiss to say: oh, you're just kids, ends up happening, and we see that even with gag orders around sexual assault. Most universities have gag orders. You can't even talk to your therapist about having been sexually assaulted if you report it to a school, and all that goes back to just show that young people are not being taken seriously. And if we don't address this now, there's going to be lasting problems. They're not going to go away.

>> **CJ Rowe:** I think another question I'd love to dive into before we go into the broader conversation. I think for us as the team working on the Courage to Act project, it was really important for us to move the conversation past sexual violence and misconduct to one where we really seek to tackle addressing and preventing gender-based violence. Now I know that you've been quite vocal, Eternity, especially on threads like your social media thread around December 6 about the importance in your writing of going past sexual violence to talk more fulsomely about the impacts of gender-based violence. Who do you think is left out when campuses have sexual violence as a focus? And a main focus of the discussion without going more broadly?

>> **Eternity Martis:** I think -- well first of all we leave out those who have also been in intimate partner violence situations. Physical violence, emotional violence, emotional abuse. All of that is completely left out. And the research that does exist shows that intimate partner violence is just as prevalent a crime on campus as sexual assault. So we lose that piece entirely because there's nowhere to go. When you're young, even if you're first or second year and you can't even figure out what your classes are, how can you find these offices that exist, right? And they don't. There's very few of them, so there's that piece. In terms of the sexual assault, who is left out in that sense of it? It's really anyone who isn't white, cis and heterosexual. Particularly female identified. It's BIPOC survivors, LGBTQ2S survivors, international students. So everyone is kind of left out of that and they all have their own kinds of -- there's all these nuances to it. For example, if you're Black, you're forced to choose between your race and your gender. Do you want to call the cops if your partner is male and Black? If you are a queer or trans student or non-binary student, there's this idea, well there's no such thing as a bad relationship. The lesbian utopia, for example. If you're an international student, you're already dealing with being not wanted. So there's all these kinds of nuances and intersecting identities that are completely left out on top of the IPV element of it.

>> **CJ Rowe:** Thank you for that. I've also been reflecting on the lack of response on the resources around IPV, especially at the time of COVID where people are relegated back into private spaces where there is no, necessarily, getting away or getting out. And I know that in Ontario and Quebec right now, your ability to leave your homes and spaces is becoming increasingly difficult again. On the west coast we still have a bit more space, a little longer hopefully. And I think that we're seeing more and more of those pieces coming forward. And folks not only not having the ability to see themselves in services like those who focus on sexual violence, but also not having the space within their home life to be able to access supports. I think your points are so key to us thinking about this much more fulsomely.

>> **Farrah Khan:** I think that's the piece we keep coming back to with the project, is that too much of the focus had been on sexual violence. Sexual violence is absolutely so important. But I think I keep going back to the thread you did on December 6th where you were like okay, great that we're working on sexual violence on campuses, but guess what, the same percentage of students that experience sexual violence are probably experiencing intimate partner violence. And if we miss out on that conversation -- it's something we're really seeing in our conversations is when they're working with survivors, they say okay, now you're talking about intimate partner violence, I can't help you because it's not the main part of my work. Or all the students guide in first year is mostly about consent education, they don't get the intimate partner violence conversation.

>> **Eternity Martis:** Absolutely. And Zoom is so weird. It's also that even someone like me, for example, I was in Women's Studies. I took a course on women and violence. And I never -- I couldn't put the two together that I was in an abusive relationship that was also emotionally abusive, sexually abusive, but they were two separate things to me. So there's even that, when they're separate, you might be sexual assault in intimate partner relationships, it also exists but I think that students have to see them as two different things.

>> **Farrah Khan:** And I think that's why we want to bring it together, this conversation. So it's not like you're experiencing homophobia over here and gender-based violence here and then sexual assault here and intimate partner violence there. It's like, this is actually my life. This is the holistic part of my life. And that's why also I really appreciate in your book and I can't say this enough, is as a racialized person to be able to read something and say okay, it's not just about me experiencing this as a woman, but also experiencing this as a racialized person the way I'm being attacked and targeted. I'd love to bring Vat into this conversation, because I know you had a question for Eternity about her book and about this work too. If you want to come into the conversation?

>> **Vatineh Magaji:** Yes, I've been, like, looking down and writing out my thoughts because everything that this conversation is revolving around is synthesizing a lot of the points that I think had come together when I was preparing for that webinar that I did, but also in the more global conversations that are happening now. Part of what I was thinking about is thinking about the impacts of this type of work and addressing these issues in people's lives in post-secondary how it expands further out to the rest of their lives. I think there's an idea that we are dealing with these problems but it's not like the real world. It's not about someone's -- it's about their experience as a young person, but it doesn't extend further out into the real world. Into: well, once you get into the real world this is how things shift. So I'm wondering, in your book and thinking about who you're targeting, what you think the expansion of these themes can be when people are moving past post-secondary. I hope that makes sense.

>> **Eternity Martis:** I think I got it, let's try. So, yeah, I thought a lot about that because when I wrote the book I was so far away from what I experienced as a student and one of the last chapters that I actually included in the book was a chapter about sexual assault at all costs and

visible bruises. Because I didn't want to go there and I thought well, one, that's a massive part of being a woman on campus. Being a student on campus. And it's also a big part of who I am today. So when I looked back on the book I realized that a lot of things that I had done or continued to do, and the anger that I felt and the PTSD that I still had was because I hadn't dealt with that. There's no doubt that it doesn't just stay in those four years, it affects every part of your life. It affects who you are, who you become. It affects your family, whether you tell them or not. It affects your relationships, your self esteem. And I wanted to write that because six years later, I was still dumbfounded as to why I felt like this. And a big part of my book and the chapter "Visible Bruises," it actually came out of my thesis that I did at Ryerson, which was: am I the only one? I can't be the only person. That's how I found out that everyone around me at Western, when people were actually in abusive relationships at the same time and nobody was talking about it. We would say hey, how is your day? We'd eat lunch and no one was saying anything. It was a point to me to show that these are things that happened during that time, those four years. But they will stay with you, you never get over it. But when you realize that there is such a larger community of survivors, that you -- you know, you can put your strength in and draw strength from, that was important for me to show. And one of the researchers that I spoke to in the book, she talks about how there's really no -- there's no inbetween. So there's dating violence resources, and then there's resources for older women. There's nothing for this group. And when that happens, that just means -- not that it's done, but when we're in our 20's and 30's and 40's and onwards, we continue the cycle of being victims or perpetrators. And that's what I really wanted to show. It's very urgent. And I know that we love to say that, you know, none of these are public health crises or epidemics of violence, but they really are.

>> Farrah Khan: I love that you raise that piece around, how if we don't look at young people and the specifics that young people experience around gender-based violence, this has long-term impacts. Because sometimes there is a thing where -- especially with shelters, as a frontline service worker sometimes when I send young women to shelters, either you go to a youth shelter or an adult women, violence against women shelter. For a young person when they're 18 and dealing with family violence and their family is abusing them, or they're with a partner that's abusive, they have nowhere to go. Sometimes the shelters are made for adult women. Youth shelters don't have the same support in place for people experiencing violence. It's something that still needs to be addressed.

>> Eternity Martis: Absolutely. That came up when I was researching for my book. Nobody felt shelters are supposed to accept, doesn't matter how old a woman is. Young people don't feel like the times they've had to go, they don't feel welcome there.

>> Farrah Khan: And you also talk about the context that when we talk about violence, we have to not just talk about it at a personal level but a systemic level. What do you think institutions can do around that piece? What are the roles of institutions here? Is it just enough? Okay we got an office, we're good.

>> **Eternity Martis:** No. And I think that we're seeing that play out. Like, what is the role? Because we see it time and again. During frosh week, for example, there's always five schools in the news that were marching down the street with pro-rape chants and they get a slap on the wrist. In researching for that I found that most of the time when they were pro-rape chants being led by students, they got a slap on the wrist. There was nothing else. So I think institutions first, university spaces, there needs to actually be -- I think they operate from this: we don't want to ruin young lives. But it translates into: we don't want to ruin young men's lives. So there's no action and ironclad unified policies, whoever is in charge gets to dole out punishments as they want. So that's the problem there. Then you have the problem with the police who, especially for young women, we are -- we've grown up in hookup culture. We've grown up in hookup app culture. We are more gender fluid than the previous generation at least. And all of these factors, right, like being -- living with a partner sooner. Because we don't have money. All these factors, if you try to even report that, when you look at Stats Canada and it tells you what defines a partner, we are so far out of that. So how do you tell, you know, how do you tell an officer: I have been sexually assaulted by some person I'm kind of sort of seeing? It's hard. So we failed on every level and we see violence increasing among women. And it's just another story, right. We're not seeing any action and what it tells me. I saw this on Twitter, I don't know if it was you who said it, Farrah, but someone said all of this comes down to the fact that we don't even see women as valuable, or survivors as valuable. So how are we going to, you know, make any institutional change? I'm very passionate about it.

>> **Farrah Khan:** No, I'm more just like -- yeah, I think all of us are passionate about it and it's one of these things where I take a side because it's hard in this moment of -- in a lockdown moment where we're seeing governments not taking into account gender-based violence. They're not taking into account young people, how the vulnerabilities of young people. The choices young people are making around housing, all those pieces you are raising.

>> **Eternity Martis:** It's frustrating. We have to start from becoming valuable and that's a long way to get to where we need to be.

>> **Farrah Khan:** And I wonder with both you and Vat, you talked -- talking about valuing, you talk in your book about the hypersexualization of Black women and the vulnerabilities and the devaluing of Black women's bodies. And how Black women are not -- the disrespect on campuses. How do you think both, like as a community organizing around that, so what's been inspiring about that, like ways you have seen Black women support each other. And then what do you think institutions need to do to back up Black women so that we can address this fully?

>> **Eternity Martis:** I think one of the greatest things that has come out of the last couple years is student activism on campus. Not only are you now a student and you're like; oh, my goodness, school work is hard and it's COVID, but now you're also fighting for accountability on campus. And I think that's what's been really great. I think that for a long time until there was social media, there was this idea that Black women turn on each other. Or Black women are enemies. What we're actually seeing is Black women supporting each other. We see it on

social media all the time, just uplifting each other. I know for myself being a journalist, there are very few of us and in that there's so much support. Like, what do you need from me? Would you like me to do this? I've had some glowing recommendation letters from other racialized women, and I'm like, that was really kind. And she said as a racialized person, as a Black woman, I know that you're not going to write this yourself. And that if you ask someone who wasn't another racialized woman you wouldn't get that. I think we are all uplifting each other but i don't think that's enough. And I think institution-wise, a lot of this comes back down to one, the representations of Black women. The angry Black woman trope is always around. We see poor Serena get it all the time. we see that when we are angry it's used as comic relief. We've got Tyler Perry disrespecting Black women everywhere. So there's all these things that we draw, and I think more so than we'd like to admit. We pull a lot of what we know about other groups of people from the media, so there's that. And the other part of that is: the classes. Like, let's have some classes and make them mandatory. Let's do a class like the one I just taught where we learn about representation. We look back on what we've done wrong so we can do better. Let's look at Serena. What are those historical stereotypes she has been subjected to? How do we start to change that? How do we make people accountable? And that revolves around critical thinking pieces that I think a lot of students don't necessarily have. Because they haven't been in the curriculum, we've all been reading Eurocentric texts since who knows. So that's really important at least on a campus level. And there was something said a couple months ago when we were in a panel a couple months ago. She was fighting to remove Philip Rushton from campus when she was a student. And he was still -- he sought tenure until I was a student. What she said was he taught a lot of scientific racism, and he taught his students that Black women were hypersexual because they had larger genitals. She said shortly after that when Black women would go out into the city, into bars, they were sexually harassed, sexually assaulted, very hypersexualized. She believes it was a direct result of one of the most popular professors at Western sharing this. We need to stop that, take ownership as campuses and replace it with actual real education.

>> **CJ Rowe:** You're speaking my language. I'm such a proponent for education because we don't know what we don't know. It's a bridge into building compassion and understanding and we have to know the history and be able to critically engage and reflect and act. Vat, I think that you have another question so I want to hand it over to you.

>> **Vatineh Magaji:** Sure. I was thinking about the place that your book, Eternity, has in obviously the conversation around gender-based violence and the way that you were able to use your personal experience to create this text to be able to inform and educate others. I'm wondering, how does that process play out for you as well as taking care of yourself and protecting yourself but still also want to be very open and vulnerable to be able to create this tool for others to use?

>> **Eternity Martis:** That is a great question, and I might have failed on the taking care of myself. I think when you write a book like this you have to be intentional as to why you are doing it, and you have to be willing to make sacrifices. You may lose your friends. You may

lose your sanity, which I think I did. But it felt really important to me as a storyteller and as someone who has really committed to telling the truth as part of my job that I tell this story because it's not just my story. It's everyone around me and I really tried to take care of myself. It's very hard. I found that chapter, Visible Bruises, for example, I would not talk to anyone. I would snap at you. I started to see my therapist and we talked through it. I think it was a reminder of when you set forward and i'm sure there are people here who want to tell their story, it's not just a retelling of memories. When you dive back into most memories, you find out what happened to you, what you may have done wrong, what you could have done and why you are the way you are now. So memories can be powerful and hurtful. So, I mean, my self care at the time was to take walks, look at cute videos of babies. I love babies and dogs. And those were all great, but it still wasn't enough in the end, but it felt necessary to tell the story. Since the book has been published I get a lot of messages from people who are like: When I read your book, all these repressed memories about how I was treated as a survivor or racialized woman, they all came to the surface because I was told that none of that mattered. It wasn't a big deal. I think temporarily being a little unhinged helped me work through it and process it, but it also worked with my intention. Other people are able to process it. I think when it comes to being a survivor or a Black woman, any time you say anything about your discomfort, someone tells you you're entitled. You're angry. It's not that bad. You're a student. You should be having fun. Then it gets repressed. So there's generations of young women of racialized people who are feeling that right now. So it was really important for me to just tell the story and tell the amount that was still respectful to my boundaries, and that would be respectful to my family. And one thing that I did deal with in the editing process was: tell us more about the assault. Tell us more about what happened to you. It was very important for me to say, the people who need to get it, they will get it. I can say less, and tell them everything they need to know so it doesn't become trauma and sticking with that.

>> **Vatineh Magaji:** I'm kind of thinking as well on the same part of how it can be used or telling your story to the people who wouldn't ordinarily hear it, be it like your friends or family or the people from your home community. I'm wondering how that played into things and the reception that happened after publicizing your story in that way.

>> **Eternity Martis:** So, nobody knew any of those things. And I come from a South Asian culture. You don't talk about partying, like I got so drunk and fell asleep on the lawn. Which did not happen, but I've seen it happen. You just don't say things like that. I come from a very liberal family, there's never been any gender expectations. No expectations of anything, really, except: be yourself. So I gave my family and siblings copies of my book two weeks before it was published because I was so terrified. They were upset in the best way for me. And they felt like they could do something. I think there's not a lot you can do as a parent because things happen. You grow up, go away, you're on your own and life happens. It's important for us to have a support system, but it's also important for us to learn how to kind of deal with it ourselves while having a support system. And so since writing it, I think they've become, as you know from the book, there's a lot of confusion around my own identity in my family. They didn't see me as a Black woman because they are brown and they raised me. I think it solved a lot of

those issues and it became race in general, sexual violence, violence against women. Those all became even more big issues in my family that we talk about, and to my friends. One thing I was worried about, when you write about being a survivor you don't want to be labeled as a survivor the rest of your life. And you don't want everyone to think that that's who you are. They were really great about not pigeonholing me. That I was more than just that. I was sharing an experience. It was a brave thing to do. But I'm so much more than that as well.

>> **Vatineh Magaji:** That's so encouraging to hear. And I feel as though lots of people of racialized backgrounds or who have parents maybe that would have seen this type of thing in a similar way to hear that, you know, you're okay. And the reception was overall okay. I think that's a really powerful message to be able to spread and I'm glad that was the case for you.

>> **Eternity Martis:** Thank You.

>> **Kelly Prevett:** I'm just going to jump in, thank you so much to all four of you for leading such a wonderful conversation so far. I do want to invite folks in the chat to drop any questions that they have for our panelists into the q & a box. And then I will pass those questions off to our lovely speakers. So if anybody has anything, feel free to drop it in there now. I do have a question in the meantime. Eternity, you talk a lot about being part of the change now in your book, and that we can create quiet revolutions and warring revelations. We can be part of a call to action and a reminder that we're part of a legacy. So where do you draw inspiration? And for all of you, what continues to fuel some of your writing and activist practices? What inspires you?

>> **Eternity Martis:** Do you want me to go first? Okay. For me, really, it's quite simple. It's feminist text and that I kind of hold my text, like my school readers closely. I think that when I was going through all this at Western as I talk about in the book, there's this a-ha moment where bell hooks talks about desire and being a Black woman. And I was like: oh my goodness, this exists. I was able to put everything I experienced into context because of so many Black scholars and feminists and queer theorists, and be who I was, and get to write because of them. So for me, my inspiration comes from all of the greats. and I still read them from time to time when I need a boost. But that's definitely where it comes from.

>> **Farrah Khan:** I know for me, being a part of Courage to Act has been the fuel for the past two years. Being able to talk to, we have about 150 people as part of this project. And it's been amazing to feel like we're actually on the precipice of actually doing change. That excites me all the time. But also feminist text. Knowing there were feminists talking about things that I didn't even know we could have conversation about. For me, one was a South Asian feminist, the first I ever read. Then I got to be in her class and I almost couldn't handle it because she was my prof. And I got to be, like, near her. I think that's also the thing about being in school and near profs that just blow your mind. What about you, Vat?

>> **Vatineh Magaji:** I would say -- I think a lot of my drive to move forward lies with, like, my friends. And the people that I surround myself with. I feel like with all the good and the bad that has come through us as we're growing up together, the thought that I can contribute to, like,

reducing that bad for us now and for their kids in the future and that sort of thing, that really is driving me forward in a very broad sense. And also, you know, I would like to have a career where I can help people. I feel like I want to be able to build a strong foundation now so that whatever I choose to do in the future I can take all these ideas with me and make sure that I'm being informed about the things that I'm learning now.

>> **CJ Rowe:** I think to echo some of what I'm hearing, where I'm finding some inspiration is definitely as far as working with the Courage to Act teams, and it's getting to work with folks. I mean, really as a team that has integrated thought machine in some ways. To get to -- I love being able to understand the world one way and then have an opportunity to learn about it in a whole new way that I've never thought of before. So, again, I often joke and say: I'm really thankful for the activists who came before me so I can wear pants and move into the gender identity and expression that is more truly myself. And my job is to figure out how to make things better so that those who come after me, and Eternity that's a couple -- that's a piece that I found echoed in your book in a few different quotes that I have written out and have on sticky notes because I think it's reading writers like yourself that help ground me in the work that I'm doing and keep me accountable to doing the work that's needed now.

>> **Kelly Prevett:** Thank you all. We have time for just one more quick question. So Sylvia was wondering -- she would love to know if Eternity has any thoughts on transformative justice as a future for approaching gender-based violence. And if anybody wants to jump in after Eternity that would be great.

>> **Eternity Martis:** I'd love someone to jump in because I haven't given it a lot of thought. But I also don't have a lot of trust in the police system. There was an article, I was trying to find it just now. But there was an article in "Yes" magazine that talked about: how do we transform accountability? What are some other ways when you're experiencing gender-based violence? So I would love someone else to step in but I definitely think that there are alternatives. So I'll just say that.

>> **Farrah Khan:** I can jump in for a sec. I'm excited that we actually have a working group with a community of practice within community -- that's looking at transformative justice on campus and what it can be and what it can't be. I think our communities and racialized communities have been doing transformative justice work for a long time. Indigenous communities have been doing it for a long time. Even from the sense of, like, I don't think I can trust the police that I can tell them our stories but I'm going to deal with child sexual abuse in my family. That's how we dealt with child sexual abuse in my family. Sometimes not in the best ways, but in other ways we did. We're going to talk to this person, isolate them this way, make sure they get accountability this way. So I think it's important to see that there is amazing work being done around this and communities have been doing this for a really long time. Especially led by Black, Indigenous and racialized women.

>> **Eternity Martis:** Echoing Farrah's point is understanding and bringing legitimacy to the methods that already exist and have existed for so long, and trying to get to the root of them and

integrate them or have them replaced. Different justice seeking methods that are already in place. I think that could potentially be a good starting point but I'm very excited to hear about the group looking at transformative justice for Courage to Act as well.

>> **CJ Rowe:** I keep looking over at my bookcase wanting to grab the books to show everyone on the screen. Eternity, thank you for making the suggestion for folks to take a look at Kai Cheng Thom's book: "I Hope We Choose Love." because that's a lot of work around transformative justice. If you haven't had the opportunity to get familiar with her work, please do make the time. Great resource.

>> **Kelly Prevett:** Amazing, thank you all so much. Eternity, Farrah, CJ, Vatineh, we are so deeply thankful to you for kicking off the series with such an important conversation, and for sharing your time and expertise with us. We've learned a lot today and have been able to hear so much of your valuable insight. The recording will be available on our website in just a few days. I also want to thank our participants for joining us and for sharing with us today. We appreciate and take inspiration from your commitment to addressing and preventing gender-based violence on campus, and we're really lucky to be able to work alongside each and every one of you. So thank you for joining us. To all of our attendees, just a kind reminder to please fill out the evaluation form and don't forget that registration is open to sign up for all of the remaining skillshare sessions that are part of the National Skillshare Series beginning this month, January 2021. They go all the way until August when we launch the Working Group's Toolkits. We'll highlight some of the groundbreaking work being done across Canada to address gender-based violence across campuses and showcase the toolkits being developed by our 150-plus project partners, including our communities in practice. You can sign up on the Courage to Act website. Thank you everyone, and I hope you have a wonderful rest of the day.