



SOCIAL WORK & WELLNESS
SUCCESSSES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN TRANSCENDING CHAOS

N A S W
National Association of Social Workers

NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER

Annual Virtual Continuing Education Conference

Keynote Speaker

Thursday, June 8th | Day 2

Transforming from Within: Social Work Promoting Wellness Through Commitment to Social Justice and Anti-Racism

This keynote address will focus on the role of social workers and the field of social work in decolonizing social work as a means of creating change and wellness for communities we serve and for the profession. Through a power, racism, oppression and privilege (PROP) framework, the discussion will offer a model for integrating an anti-racist pedagogy into social work. This includes how to facilitate and support critical and challenging conversations around our intersecting identities. The PROP lens will be shared as well as the efforts to create a social work course and integrate a PROP framework in a social work program.

The relationship between students and field instructors is a significant part of decolonizing social work. Given the necessary tools, field supervisors can create environments for learning that takes into consideration appreciating differences and similarities for building authentic relations. Through a description of justice based field education, there will be a fuller exploration of creating a space for dialogue and learning with an emphasis on social justice and community wellness.

Lastly, we explore wellness and in particular transformative interactions and celebrating joy. Promoting social justice is promoting wellness. The importance of building authentic cross racial and cross cultural connections emphasizes a commitment to collective healing and community care in social work.



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Dr. Ovita F. Williams

**Executive Director, Action Lab for Social Justice
and Lecturer of Discipline at
Columbia School of Social Work**

Dr. Ovita F. Williams is Executive Director of the Action Lab for Social Justice and Lecturer of Discipline at Columbia School of Social Work. During her clinical practice as a social worker, Dr. Williams worked with survivors of intimate partner violence in the forensic social work arena with ten years of experience as the Director of Clinical Services in the Counseling Services Unit at the Kings County District Attorney's Office. Prior to this position, Dr. Williams was a child and family therapist at the Children's Aid Society. She is currently involved in racial equity facilitation and committed to social justice and ending gender-based violence.

Dr. Williams has developed and facilitated interactive workshops for social workers, managers, and various practitioners at organizations on facilitating challenging dialogues around race, class, gender, sexual orientation and intersecting identities. At Columbia, Dr. Williams has worked with students, alumni, faculty and administrators on the development of a new course *Decolonizing Social Work* through a power, race, oppression, privilege framework. The course centers dismantling anti-Black racism and white supremacy culture.

She is coauthor of *Learning to Teach, Teaching to Learn: A guide for social work field education (2019)* and contributed a chapter to *The enduring, invisible, and ubiquitous centrality of whiteness, (2022)*, Ed. Kenneth Hardy.

A graduate of Vassar College ('90) and Columbia University ('93), Dr. Williams received her doctorate from the City University of New York Graduate Center, Silberman School of Social Welfare in New York City.

Dr. Williams was born in Guyana, South America and calls Brooklyn, New York home. The eldest of four brave women, daughter to a strong woman and mother to a beautiful daughter, Dr. Williams is committed to celebrating womanhood and sisterhood. She enjoys exploring beaches, locating lighthouses and random road trips.