



African women on philanthropy, change and power

by  the Stephen Lewis FOUNDATION

Ask Her Talks Speakers and Special Guests – Fall 2015



Jackie Richardson, Evening Host
Award-winning singer and actress

Jackie Richardson is an award-winning actress and one of Canada's foremost singers of gospel, blues and jazz. She has performed around the world — from Asia to the West Indies — and hosted the May 2015 *Ask Her Talks* in Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa. Jackie is the recipient of NAACP, Juno, Betty, Dora, Jessie, Gemini, TBS Lifetime Achievement and Canadian Black Lifetime Achievement awards and nominations. She is currently featured in "The Adventures of a Black Girl In Search of God" at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, and is a fixture at Toronto's Soul Pepper Theatre. Jackie's recent musical recordings include collaborations with Micah Barnes, Bruce Cassidy, and the Breithaupt Brothers. In 2014 she toured the North West Territories with Joe Sealy's "Africville Stories" and returned again in 2015 with her daughter, Juno-Award winner Kim Richardson, as they performed their "Mother and Daughter Reunion" show. Jackie is renowned for her passion for human rights and social justice. She has performed in concerts for the Stephen Lewis Foundation's Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign and lent her vocal talents to a summer 2015 production of "The Journey," a play about the revitalization of Toronto's Regent Park neighbourhood.



Peres Abeka
Chairperson and co-founder of the Young Women Campaign Against AIDS (YWCAA) in Kenya

Peres Abeka is the Chairperson and Co-Founder of Young Women Campaign Against AIDS (YWCAA) — a non-governmental organization in Kenya. She is a social scientist and community mobilizer who has worked in the areas of programme management, public outreach, gender and HIV & AIDS justice, community sensitization and more with various UN agencies, peacekeeping missions and international NGOs. Thus far, her work has brought her to Afghanistan, Northern Uganda, South Africa, Pakistan, Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria, Kenya, Jordan and Lebanon. As an educationist, Peres has also coordinated numerous workshops and training sessions, and received the "Woman of Substance" award at the 10th anniversary of the African Women's Development Fund in 2010. Her work with YWCAA focuses on the fight against HIV & AIDS among women and youth, as well as the tireless defense of their human rights.



Kidist Belete

Founder and Executive Director of Developing Families Together (DFT) in Ethiopia

Kidist Belete is the founding Executive Director of Developing Families Together (DFT), an Ethiopian grassroots organization that works in women’s empowerment, orphan protection, HIV & AIDS prevention and care, and community development. Under her leadership, DFT’s programmes have positively influenced the lives of over 10,000 individuals — rehabilitating families devastated by HIV & AIDS (often headed by poor grandmothers), educating young people about HIV, promoting income generating activities to at-risk youth, and supporting women fighting against cultural practices that increase their exposure to poverty and disease. Altogether, Kidist has more than 15 years of experience working in the area of gender justice, having also worked as a Gender and Development Officer at the Aid Commission of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. She has also served as a board member of Transparency Ethiopia and plays an active role in several civil society organizations in Ethiopia, including the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Network, the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), and the Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Network.



Hope Chigudu

Co-founder of the Zimbabwe Women’s Resource Centre and Network

Hope Chigudu is feminist activist and the Co-Founder of the Zimbabwe Women’s Resource Centre and Network. As well, she is the former chair of the board of the Urgent Action Fund-Africa and of the Global Fund for Women. During her tenure at the Global Fund for Women, grants to Africa increased dramatically, due to her quest to see African women tell their own stories. Hope is an internationally renowned consultant with numerous women’s organizations in Africa and Asia as well as development partners and agencies such as Hivos, Oxfam Novib, Danida, UNIDO, UNIFEM, Cordaid and ActionAid, among others. She has also served as an advisor with several international decision-making bodies and funding agencies such as the African Women’s Development Fund, Red Umbrella, and UNIFEM (UN Women). The author of “Lessons in Empowerment Based on the Experiences of African NGO’s” and “Reviving Democracy: Citizens at the Heart of Governance,” Hope has worked extensively on a variety of issues pertaining to HIV & AIDS, and is committed to a community-centered and participatory human rights approach that is locally anchored, but universal and global in its vision.



Vuyiseka Dubula

Former General Secretary of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa

Vuyiseka Dubula is the former General Secretary of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa and former Director of Programmes at Sonke Gender Justice — an organization that works to promote gender equality across Africa. She lectures at Stellenbosch University on social aspects of HIV & AIDS, and is currently completing her PhD at the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s school of Development Studies. Vuyiseka has been living openly with HIV for 14 years, and is committed to ensuring that all people living with HIV have a positive voice in the struggle against the epidemic. She currently serves as the national representative for people living with HIV on the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), and has served on two national Ministerial Advisory Committees on Leadership, Governance and Service Delivery. As well, Vuyiseka was a member of the UNAIDS High Level Commission on HIV Prevention, and is a former Community Mobilisation Officer for Médecins Sans Frontières. She is the recipient of many awards for her activism, including the 2010 John Lloyd Foundation Leadership Award, and was recognised by the University of Oslo as a “Courageous Leader” in 2003. She is also the founder of the Activist Centre for Education and Development, which strives to facilitate access to higher education for social justice activists.



Dorothy Onyango

Founder and Executive Director of Women Fighting AIDS in Kenya (WOFAK)

Dorothy Onyango is the Executive Director of Women Fighting AIDS in Kenya (WOFAK). She co-founded the organization in 1994, four years after learning that she was HIV positive. Today, Dorothy sits on a number of boards of strategic organizations in Kenya, including the National AIDS Control Council (NACC) and chairs the National Programmes Committee. She previously served as the Chairperson of National Empowerment Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya (NEPHAK), and also sits on the board of the Society for Women and AIDS in Kenya (SWAK). Dorothy has been an active member of the treatment access coalition movement, responsible for the current drop in costs of treatment for persons living with HIV & AIDS in Kenya and has been at the forefront in fighting for the rights of women living with and affected by HIV & AIDS. She is the former global Co-Chair of the International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW) and was recently appointed by the Kenyan government to serve on the board of the National Council for Children’s Services. As well, she is the representative of NGOs on the Kenya Coordinating Mechanism for Global Fund to Fight HIV, TB and Malaria, and a Chairperson of the Pan African Positive Women’s Coalition (PAPWC). Dorothy’s vision is to see a world free from HIV infections and in which women can achieve their full socio-economic and political potential without undue hindrances.



“Britta B” Badour

Spoken Word Artist

“Britta B.” Badour is a spoken word artist, keynote speaker and artist educator living in Toronto. She is an ambassador for R.I.S.E. Edutainment (Reaching Intelligent Souls Everywhere)—a creative community of youth, artists, activists, free-thinkers and revolutionaries creating spaces for self-expression and healing through performance arts. As well, Britta is an artist educator for UNITY Charity, which empowers youth to be role models and leaders in their communities. As co-host of the What Makes a Man (White Ribbon) Conference, she is committed to raising awareness in regards to violence against women, and is working to redefine the meaning of masculinity. She has spoken at numerous TEDx events and has travelled across North America with her spoken word poetry, inspiring audiences through her personal performances and representing various organizations and causes. Britta has integrated her passion, creativity, and philanthropic attitude to become an influential role model and an effective activist in her community.