Teaching While Black: 
Feminism & Spirituality Pedagogical Tools for Resistance and Social Justice

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12:30-1:30 pm – Room 12-274, OISE, 252 Bloor St. West

Abstract: Growing up in rural Kenya exposed me to African philosophy and psychology; African sociology and Indigenous ways of knowing; and African spirituality (without naming it); different African values and in particular the fundamental principles of life. These early teachings provided the basic foundation for my teaching while Black in Canadian Universities. These fundamentals were confirmed by most women participants from my nationwide research on feminisms in Canada. The women’s lived experiences provided the entry point to our discussion of social justice and what it meant to each one of them. Questions explored in this presentation: What does it mean to teach while Black? Is it a contradiction between critical engagement and being on the margin? What does it mean to be a Black, female, African and university professor? How much navigation, negotiation and resilience is required to teach while Black? The study revealed that critical consciousness is not acquired through sharing of oppressive historical experiences or marginalized identities, but through engagement in transformative politics or particular modes of activism. The presentation will focus on insights from the participants on their lived experiences.

Bio: Professor Njoki Wane is a Professor and Associate Chair in the Department of Social Justice Education at OISE, University of Toronto. She is a recognized scholar in the areas of Black feminisms in Canada & Africa, African indigenous knowledges, African women and spirituality. One of her most recent publications is Indigenous African Knowledge Production: Food Processing Practices Among Kenyan Rural Women. She has co-authored an anti-racist training manual, Equity in Practice: Transformational Training Resource with Larissa Cairncross: Ruptures: Anti-Colonial & Anti-Racist Feminist Theorizing with Jennifer Jagire & Zahra Murad; A Handbook on African Traditional Healing Approaches & Research Practices with Erica Neegangwedini. She has co-edited Spirituality, Education & Society: An Integrated Approach with Energy Manyimo & Eric Ritskes and The Politics of Cultural Knowledge with Arlo Kempf and Marlon Simmons. Professor Wane headed the Office of Teaching Support in 2009-2012. She has been nominated for TVO Best Lecturer, and is the recipient of the African Women Achievement Award (2007); the Harry Jerome Professional Excellence Award (2008) the David E. Hunt Award for Excellence in Graduate Education at OISE (2016); and the University of Toronto President’s Teaching Award (2017).