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Contact: Antoinette Isable-Jones aijones@fpwa.org

Sherice Brammer sbrammer@fpwa.org

FPWA Brings Together More Than 250 Nonprofit Professionals for the 3rd Courageous Conversations Conference

This year's conference focused on addressing trauma and poverty within nonprofits.

(New York, NY) - More than 250 nonprofit, faith and philanthropic leaders from across New York City attended FPWA's third installation of its Courageous Conversations Conference on Wednesday, April 10th in partnership with the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research at New York University. This year's conference explored the often-unseen ways that trauma and poverty play out in mission-driven work within nonprofit organizations. The prior conferences addressed trauma among individuals and communities.

The conference opened with remarks from FPWA Program Director Alecia Anthony who spoke about how poverty and trauma manifest itself within individuals and communities, and how that translates to organizations. She also emphasized the importance of recognizing that both external and internal trauma exists.

"The intersections of poverty, racism, and trauma often perpetuate a continuous cycle of hardship and distress for the clients of human services organizations," said Ms. Anthony. "However, trauma also lives within organizations and its employees. Courageous Conversations seeks to understand the internal cycle of trauma and poverty, identify the impact of organizations coping with this vicious cycle, and begin the process of addressing it."

Dr. James Rodriguez, Director of Trauma and Resiliency Based Services at the McSilver Institute, conducted a live electronic poll of audience members to better gauge how organizations currently deal with trauma and organizational stress. The polling showed that most participants recognize the need to address organizational trauma, stress and burnout, but also that one's perspective about how well organizations are actually doing towards this goal may depend on where you sit within the organization – in a direct service role, administrative/supervisory role, or as senior leadership.



"It's not just about coping and dealing with stress and adversity," said Dr. Rodriguez. "We want to identify ways people can thrive and encourage non-profit staff to practice resilience in the workplace."

Keynote speaker Alan van Capelle, CEO & President, Educational Alliance and Adjunct Professor of Public Service, NYU Wagner, provided a moving lecture about organizational culture, trauma-informed care, and building workplace dignity and equity for staff.

"The people working at human services organizations are on the front lines, supporting some of our most vulnerable populations," said Mr. van Capelle. For many New Yorkers, they represent the safety net. Yet, the trauma employees themselves carry from both their personal experiences and those they absorb from clients can have a profound and largely unacknowledged impact on their well-being and ability to sustain the work they do. That's why it is more important than ever that we begin to have honest conversations about the effects of untreated trauma and identify ways that organizations can provide support and resources so our employees can not only continue to heal their clients but also themselves."

Rounding out the afternoon was a cross-sectional panel discussion about trauma-informed care in nonprofits through the lenses of leadership, lived experience, and practice. The panel featured Gabby Cudjoe Wilkes, Pastor, Double Love Experience; Mayra Lopez, LMSW, Senior Director of Trauma-Informed Programming, Good Shepherd Services in NYC; Stanley Richards, Executive Vice President, The Fortune Society; and Dr. Shari K. Brink, President and CEO, Blanton-Peale Institute and Counseling Center.

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About FPWA

FPWA is an anti-poverty policy and advocacy organization committed to advancing economic opportunity and upward mobility for low-income New Yorkers. Having a prominent New York presence for nearly 100 years, FPWA has long served New York City's social service sector, providing grants to help individuals and families meet their basic needs, and advocating for fair public policies on behalf of people in need and the agencies that serve them. FPWA's member network of 170 human-service and faith-based



organizations reach more than 1.5 million people in New York's communities each year. Join us at fpwa.org, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#).