

eliminating racism
empowering women

yw
boston



F.Y.R.E. INITIATIVE
Fierce Youth Reigniting Excellence

Igniting Your **FYRE** Within

Sharing our experiences of COVID-19

Saturday, June 5 11 AM – 3 PM Eastern Time
Online Event





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Thank you for joining us for YW Boston's first-ever F.Y.R.E. Symposium!

YW Boston is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

F.Y.R.E. stands for Fierce Youth Reigniting Excellence. The **F.Y.R.E. Initiative** is YW Boston's leadership and empowerment program for middle school girls in the Greater Boston area. The program's curriculum incorporates social justice education, positive identity development, and civic engagement.

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Igniting Your FYRE Within

Sharing our experiences of COVID-19



YW Boston's F.Y.R.E. Initiative (Fierce Youth Reigniting Excellence) is excited to welcome you to our first-ever F.Y.R.E. Symposium titled "Igniting Your FYRE Within: Sharing our experiences of COVID-19."

As part of the F.Y.R.E. Initiative, participants create a community action project. Today, our 2021 cohort of igniters will reflect and share their learnings with the Greater Boston community and engage with other youth leaders from across Greater Boston.

Dear Friends,

Three years ago, YW Boston went through some major changes. We took a critical look at Greater Boston and asked ourselves to determine where we could make the most impact with our mission to eliminate racism and empower women. We learned that there was this gap in leadership programming for middle school girls of color, which we knew we could fill.

The F.Y.R.E. Initiative began because we whole-heartedly believe in the change that girls can lead when they have the support to build a sense of identity, understand existing inequities, and become empowered to work together. We have come a long way since launching in 2019.

Igniters, I encourage you to leverage the connections in our virtual event space today. There are people here who work in all different parts of the city, and they are ready to hear what you have to say. Introduce yourselves and create relationships that will help you continue to grow as leaders.

And to the adults in the room, it is your responsibility to lean into today's activities. There is so much we can learn from these intergenerational discussions, and so many young people you can partner with. This is why I believe so much in what we are doing at YW Boston – we are creating spaces for these conversations that move our communities forward.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth".

Beth Chandler

YW Boston President and CEO

YW BOSTON

OUR HISTORY

On March 3, 1866, thirty women in Boston met at the home of civic reformer Pauline Durant to adopt a constitution for the Boston Young Women's Christian Association. Over 150 years later, YW Boston remains a leader in the cause of advancing equity and opportunity for women, people of color, and in particular women of color.

Our Mission

YW Boston is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

As the first YWCA in the country, YW Boston has consistently been a leader in advancing racial and gender equity.

In the 1860's YW Boston advanced independence for women by establishing one of the earliest residences for single working women. The facility offered training in domestic service work, creating a path to financial self-sufficiency for young women.

In the 1880's YW Boston's Traveler's Aid program met immigrant women arriving in Boston's port and connected them with resources and services to build their lives in the US.

By the 1920's YW Boston began promoting racial integration through an "Interracial Committee" made up of women attending Boston's colleges.

Today, YW Boston continues working towards its mission through programs that address the most challenging and persistent inequities in the city, particularly those that lie at the intersection of race and gender.





YW BOSTON OUR WORK

YW Boston's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Services—such as InclusionBoston and LeadBoston—as well as our F.Y.R.E. Initiative and advocacy work, help individuals and organizations change policies, practices, attitudes, and behaviors with a goal of creating more inclusive environments where women, people of color, and especially women of color can succeed.



F.Y.R.E. Initiative (Fierce Youth Reigniting Excellence)

With the F.Y.R.E. Initiative, launched in the Fall of 2019, YW Boston facilitators conduct a 12-15-week leadership development series for girls grades 6th through 9th. The series brings together social justice education, positive identity development, and civic engagement, culminating in small group civics projects. This model takes place in schools or Out of School Time programs, and it is developed to operate in a “girls group” structure rather than a traditional classroom structure. Core to the program is an effort to provide experiential learning opportunities and dialogue to build understanding and increase social-emotional learning. Sessions can be facilitated in-person or remotely.

YW Boston Gender Inclusion Statement:

We use the terms “womxn” and “gxrl” as terms to include anyone, including transgender, non-binary, gender-fluid, polygender, and gender non-conforming people, whose key gender identity, experience, and internal perception on the spectrum of gender is woman or girl.

For more information, please visit ywboston.org/fyre or contact TiElla Grimes at tgrimes@ywboston.org





Igniting Your **FYRE** Within

Sharing our experiences of COVID-19

EVENT AGENDA

- 11:00 AM Networking
- 11:10 AM Welcome remarks from TiElla Grimes
- 11:20 AM Youth Poet: “A Creation of Their Own Making” by Judeline Prophet
- 12:00 PM Keynote Address from Portia Blunt
- 12:30 PM Intermission
- 12:45 PM Young Women’s Panel: Olivya Deeble, Kaelyn Phillips, Sydney Stewart, Akeda Hunter, and Jhenerie Loreus
- 1:30 PM Intergenerational Table Talks
- 2:30 PM Celebration and presentation of Certificates of Completion
- 2:50 PM Closing Remarks

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Portia Blunt

Vice President of Apparel, Reebok

Portia Blunt serves as the Vice President of Apparel at Reebok. In her role, she leads the apparel team and drives product excellence across all apparel product categories to enable commercial success. Portia spent 13 years at New Balance and she held a variety of roles in the apparel business, including leading apparel innovation, where she was responsible for ideating, visioning, and implementing new product for commercial concepts ultimately at Director of Apparel Operations. While at New Balance she also served as a member of the Diversity Council, where she was instrumental in the development of the current diversity, equity and inclusion strategy for the brand. She led the creation of their employee resource & affinity group framework and has been a fierce champion for D&I efforts throughout her career. Before New Balance, Portia began her career in apparel design at the U.S. Marine Corps in Quantico, VA where she was responsible for designing men’s and women’s uniforms. Portia is a graduate of Virginia Tech. An advocate for community, Portia serves on the Board of Trustees at the Woodward School for Girls in Quincy, MA.



SPEAKER

Representative Liz Miranda

State Representative, 5th Suffolk District of Roxbury and Dorchester

Since elected in 2018, Elizabeth “Liz” Miranda has served as State Representative for the 5th Suffolk District of Roxbury and Dorchester. Representative Miranda currently serves as the Vice Chair of the Committee on Human Resources and Employee Engagement and serves on the committee’s on the Joint Committee(s) on Community Development and Small Businesses, Public Safety, and Homeland Security, and Veterans and Federal Affairs. In her first term, Representative Miranda has filed and passed legislation to reform policing, improve racial disparities in maternal health, promote environmental justice within disproportionately impacted communities, and ensure just recovery for micro-to-small businesses most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the daughter of Cabo Verdean immigrants, Representative Miranda has been a tireless advocate for the Safe Communities Act and the Work and Family Mobility Act, while leading the fight for an equitable recovery that includes BIPOC workers. Rep. Miranda’s career has aimed to build resident-led leadership and advocacy for youth development, violence prevention, and justice.



SPEAKER

Shaitia Spruell

Commissioner, Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

Shaitia Spruell is a proud mom, and Commissioner on the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women. She has served as a Commissioner since November 2019, appointed by the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators, and currently serves as the Chair for the MCSW Legislative & Public Policy Committee. Originally from Springfield, Shaitia lives in Clinton, MA, and currently works for the Office of the State Treasurer & Receiver General as their Program Manager primarily overseeing Women’s Economic Empowerment Programming and supporting financial education programming. Before joining the MCSW, Shaitia served as a Regional Commissioner on the Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls for one year. She also is a member of the Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition where she focuses on economic justice and education. Shaitia is passionate about financial literacy, empowering girls, and women of color.



PANELIST

Akeda Hunter

College Adviser, TechBoston Academy

“Graduate of Boston University with a Dual Major in Child, Family, and Culture Psychology and Youth, Justice and Advocacy in 2019. I currently serve as a College Adviser at TechBoston Academy, working with College Advising Corps - Boston University (which is also Americorps).

I enjoy facilitating conversations and trainings with teenagers focused on their growth and futures; along with what it may take to get there. My

passion for Positive Youth Development is something that I carry into every position or role that I take. My personal goal is to do this work exclusively with young Black girls like myself. “



PANELIST

Jheneire Loreus

Mental Health Counselor, Boston Public Schools

Jheneire Loreus is a loving mother, mental health counselor, visual artist, musician, motivational speaker, and social justice advocate. Born in Boston, her roots are grounded in Turtle Island (North America), Cuba, Haiti, and various regions of Africa. She holds dual Master's degrees in Nonprofit Leadership and Social Work from Wheelock College, now Boston University. As a Mental Health Counselor partner in Boston Public

Schools, she is committed to educating, enlightening, and empowering youth through holistic restorative practices. She dedicates her career to combating institutional racism and injustices, and building and fostering community consciousness.



PANELIST

Kaelyn Mcinnis

Sophomore, Blue Hills Regional Technical School

“Hi, my name is Kaelyn Mcinnis. I’m 16 years old and I’m a sophomore at Blue Hills Regional. It’s a vocational school so half the time I’m in my shop, Criminal Justice, and the other half in academics. I’m most interested in becoming a surgeon as well as a defense attorney when I grow up. I spent most of my time working and doing homework, but my favorite ways to relax are talking to my friends or just binge watching Criminal Minds.”



PANELIST

Olivya Deeble

Sophomore, John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics and Science

“My name is Olivya Deeble and I’m sixteen years old. I’m a Capricorn. I attend the John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics and Science and I’m a sophomore. I work at the Gallivan community center and I’ve been going there since I was about eight years old.”



PANELIST

Sydney Stewart

Program Coordinator, Facing History & Ourselves

“I’m Sydney and I am passionate about education, equity, anti-racism work, and youth empowerment. I currently work as Program Coordinator at Facing History & Ourselves, an international education and professional development nonprofit that uses lessons of history to challenge teachers and their students to stand up to bigotry and hate.



I graduated from Wellesley College in 2018 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Peace & Justice Studies and a minor in Education Studies. In my free time, I can be found around the table with friends, singing with the Kuumba Singers of Harvard College, or giving back to the community.”

YW BOSTON BOARD MEMBERS

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Stay engaged with YW Boston's F.Y.R.E. Initiative!

Follow YW Boston **@ywboston** and the F.Y.R.E. Initiative **@yw_fyre** on Instagram to stay in touch with events, content, and our Igniters.



Did you know?

89% of gxrls demonstrated gains in their social-emotional learning after engaging with the F.Y.R.E. Initiative.

Do you believe the F.Y.R.E. Initiative would be a good addition to your school or community?

Find out more about the program by contacting TiElla Grimes, F.Y.R.E. Initiative Program Manager, at **tgrimes@ywboston.org** or by visiting **ywboston.org/fyre**

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