

## Professional / Academic Biographies and Reflection Statements

### **AUSTIN, Gool:**

Mobedyar Guloo Austin is a retired Speech/language Pathologist, who decided to go through the mobedyar training a few years ago under the mentor ship of Ervad Tehemton Mirza. Parents of Zoroastrian children were keen that I teach the London (Ontario) kids about our religion, so I took on that task for 10 years. She is a founding member of the brain injury association (BIAL) and enjoyed supporting that population in terms of obtaining services and rehabilitating them. She is continuously interested in health issues and presently is involved with "Age Friendly London", to make London an age friendly city!

### **BAGLI, Jehan:**

Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli was born in Mumbai India. He received his B.Sc. and his B.Sc. (Tech) degree from University of Bombay. He was awarded the J.N.TATA scholarship for his Ph.D. studies at the London University. He did four years of post-doctoral studies at the Johns Hopkins University, followed by NRC fellowship at Laval University, He was research scientist at Wyeth Research laboratories for thirty seven years where he rose from Senior Research Scientist to Distinguished Research Fellow and retired in 1997. Dr. Bagli is an ordained priest through Navar and Murtab ceremonies. He was a founding member and President of Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, editor of Gavashni, a North American Zarathushti publication, for 16 years, and founding editor of FEZANA journal. He is the author and co- author of several books on the religion of Zarathushtra and its rituals. He was the recipient of the FEZANA Excellence in Profession/Business Award in 1994, and Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017.

### **BEKHRANDNIA, Shahin:**

Ms. Shahin Bekhrandnia is the Jt. Hon. Secretary and Religious Coordinator for the World Zoroastrian Organization in London (UK). Shahin Bekhradnia studied for her BA degree in Modern Languages (Russian & French) at St. Hilda's college, Oxford university. She also completed a post-graduate M.Litt thesis (on Iranian Zoroastrian identity in the 20th century) in Social Anthropology at St. Antony's college, Oxford university. Later she obtained a PGCE teaching degree from Westminster College, Oxford University. She was cofounder, tutor and principal of a private college in Oxford where she taught A level subjects in Ancient History, Classical Civilisation, French, Russian and Latin (A/S). She continues to teach these subjects elsewhere in Oxford after selling the school. In 1993 she became a magistrate on the Oxfordshire bench where she sits in both the adult Criminal and Family courts. She is Chairperson of SMART, a charity which specialises in helping homeless people and specially those with addiction problems (alcohol & drugs). She is also co-founder of the Yazd based charity, The Pourchista Foundation, which teaches income-earning practical skills to women & provides a day centre for Zoroastrian seniors. She is the granddaughter of a Yazdi priest, Mobed Shahbahram Shahrvin, renowned in his times as a poet, mathematician and star gazer. She is committed to environmental consciousness-raising and has several times been a candidate for the UK Green Party in national parliamentary and local elections. She has lectured at many international venues and published several articles on Zoroastrianism. She is regularly in touch with Zoroastrian refugees (both born and converts), does whatever she can to support them and has appeared as an expert witness at UK Immigration Tribunals.

### **BERRY, Sujata:**

Ms. Sujata Berry is a producer of radio, television, and web stories, for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). She currently produces White Coat, Black Art for the CBC. Among her other passions are singing in choir.

**BIDEGAIN, Ana María:**

Dr. Ana María Bidegain was born in Colonia Suiza, Uruguay. She studied History in Uruguay and Belgium, where she earned her PhD, with great distinction at the Catholic University of Louvain. She developed her academic career in Colombia, where she lived and taught for more than 20 years. Dr. Bidegain founded the History Department in the University of Los Andes and opened the field of Religious Studies at the National University of Colombia. In the 2003-2004 biennium, she directed the Social Sciences Research Center of the National University of Colombia. Ana María was a Visiting Professor in Harvard's Women's Studies in Religion Program. Currently, she is the Program Director for Research at the Latin American and Caribbean Center at FIU. In 2005, she edited and published two books that resulted from her teaching and research experience in Colombia: *Historia del Cristianismo en Colombia. Corrientes y Diversidad* (Editorial Taurus) and *Globalización y Diversidad Religiosa en Colombia* (Nacional University of Colombia Press). Dr. Bidegain's research interest has been related to two topics: the presence of women in Latin American Christian History and the Religious Experience of Latin American and Caribbean migrants. As a result, in October 2009 she published the *Participación y protagonismo de las mujeres en la historia del Catolicismo Latinoamericano* (Buenos Aires, Argentina); several book chapters such as "Frauen, empowerment und religiöse institutionen in der lateinamerikanischen geschichte" in Empowerment von Frauen in der lateinamerikanischen Geschichte (V.R.Azcuy-M. Eckholt eds) Munster, 2009; "Le Martyre des religieuse en Amerique Latine au 20e siecle. L'importante historique de la vie religieuse feminine pour le Catholicism latino-americain". In L'image d'Oscar Romero Héros: Prophètes et martyrs d'Amerique Latine. (C. Zappia) Academie –Bruylant.BE, Louvain, 2009 and a polemic article co-authored with the theologian Maria Clara Bingemer: "Latin American Matristics: Beginnings of Recognition?" in *Concilium* 2009/5.

**CLOUGH, David:**

Dr. Clough completed his Ph.D. at Yale University, and is currently Professor of Theological Ethics in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Chester (UK). Dr. Clough's teaching and research focus are the ethical questions provoked by the juxtaposition of the Christian tradition and the world as we find it. His previous work and research interest has surrounded Karl Barth's ethics and Christian pacifism. Presently, Dr. Clough's central concern is the place of animals in Christian theology and ethics. He has published extensively, including the book, *On Animals: Systematic Theology*, which has been praised as: "indisputably the most important and comprehensive theological treatment of animals to have appeared in any language at any time in the Christian tradition." Dr. Clough serves as the President of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics, and is Co-Chair of the Animals and Religion Group of the American Academy of Religion. He is simultaneously, Visiting Professor at the Centre for Animal Welfare, at University of Winchester. In addition, Dr. Clough serves in the capacity of a lay preacher in the Methodist Church within the United Kingdom. He has been part of the Methodist Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment, and has served on national ecumenical working groups on the ethics of modern warfare, and the theology of climate change. In 2015, Dr. Clough launched the CreatureKind project (<http://www.becreaturekind.org/>) which draws on his research to engage churches in the UK and North America with farmed animal welfare as a faith issue. Dr. Clough lives next-door to Chester Zoo, with his family of five humans, one cat, and three gerbils. He can be followed on Facebook or Twitter @DLClough.

**CLUBWALA, Astad:**

Mr. Astad Clubwala is the President of the Zoroastrian Association of New York (ZAGNY).

**DASTOOR, Dolly:**

Dr. Dolly Dastoos is a widely published research clinical psychologist and specializes in the assessment of dementias. She, most recently was Clinical Administrative Chief, at the Program in Dementia with Psychiatric Comorbidity, at the Douglas Mental Health University Institute, in Montreal. And also, an Assistant Professor in Psychiatry, at McGill University. She received her doctorate from Concordia University. Before coming to Canada, she was a Senior Research Fellow in Psychiatry and the coordinator of the World Health Organization (WHO) Project on Schizophrenia at the University of Ibadan. She has been active in women's organizations, especially Zonta International and attended CSW meetings in Vienna and New York. She is past President of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec and of FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) the umbrella organization representing over 20,000 Zoroastrians in United States and Canada. She is currently the Editor-in-Chief of the FEZANA Journal, since 2005. Currently she is a trustee and vice chair of the board of the Parliament of World's Religions.

**DASTUR, Mehbud:**

Ervad Mehbud Dastur is an active mobed in GTA community. He was born and brought up in Mumbai, India. He learnt the Avesta prayers to be a Zoroastrian priest from Dadar Athornan Institute and was ordained as a priest at the age of 12. He learnt the Avesta and Pahlavi language and translation during his school and college days. He completed his Bachelor of Commerce from Mumbai University and has been very interested in computer technology from his youth. He has been in Toronto, Canada for over 20 years where he is very much involved as a Zoroastrian priest with the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO). He is married to Zenobia and they have two young sons, Xersis and Karl. His older son Xersis is also a priest and takes part in community prayers. Mehbud uses his knowledge of IT to administer the ZSO website and enhance their communications system. Ervad Dastur is also involved with the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC). He has worked for well known companies like SIEMENS and McKinsey & Co. His current full-time work currently involves working for a private company assisting with the IT Operations and Support for the EMS Services across most of Ontario.

**DHONDY, Farrukh:**

Mr. Farrukh Dhondy is an Indian-born British writer, playwright, screenwriter and left-wing activist of Parsi descent, who resides in the United Kingdom. He is well known not only for his writing, but also for his film and TV work. He first attended Cambridge University and completed postgraduate studies at Leicester University, and was later a lecturer at Leicester College of Further Education and Archbishop Temple School in Lambeth in London. Dhondy became involved with the Indian Workers' Association and later, in London, with the British Black Panthers. He joined the publication *Race Today* in 1970, along with his close friend Darcus Howe, and former partner Mala Sen. As a race activist and academic, he came to be associated with Black and left-wing intellectuals and activists such as Stuart Hall and Trevor Phillips. He developed a dialogue with V. S. Naipaul. Dhondy's literary output is vast, including books for children, textbooks and biographies, as well as plays for theatre and scripts film and television.<sup>[5]</sup> He is also a columnist, a biographer (of C. L. R. James; 2001), and media executive, having been Commissioning Editor at Channel Four from 1984 to 1997. During his time with Channel Four, he wrote the comedy series *Tandoori Nights* (1985–87) which concerned the rivalry of two curry house owners. His children's stories include *KBW (Keep Britain White)*, a study of a young white boy's response to anti-Bengali racism. In 2011, Dhondy published his translation of selections from the Sufi poet Jalaluddin Rumi, *Rumi: a New Translation*. He also wrote the screenplay for the Bollywood historical blockbuster *Mangal Pandey*, starring Aamir Khan and Toby Stephens. In 2012, he scripted a short film called *The K File*. This film dealt with a fictional take on the judgement of Ajmal Kasab and was directed by Oorvazi Irani. In 2013 his

critically acclaimed play *Devdas* was premiered in London and was subsequently replayed globally. 2013 also saw the publication of the novel *Prophet Of Love* (HarperCollins). Dhondy was lauded in the respected political magazine *New Internationalist*, in its prestigious "final page". In 2015 Dhondy interviewed Nobel Laureate Sir V. S. Naipaul in India and in London as part of the Jaipur Literature Festival and his publishers produced a collection of his greatest works in an anthology.

**DiCARLO, Christopher:**

Dr. Christopher DiCarlo is a philosopher, educator, and author. He currently teaches in the Faculties of Human Biology and Philosophy at the University of Toronto. He is also a lifetime member of Humanist Canada and an Expert Advisor for the Centre for Inquiry Canada. He has been invited to speak at numerous national and international conferences and written many scholarly papers ranging from bioethics to cognitive evolution. His latest book entitled: How to Become a Really Good Pain in the Ass: A Critical Thinker's Guide to Asking the Right Questions was released world-wide by Prometheus Press in August, 2011 and is currently in its fifth printing and is an international best-seller. He is a past Visiting Research Scholar at Harvard University in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences: Department of Anthropology and the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. He is currently working on his latest book tentatively entitled: Flying Without A Pilot: A Determined Look at the Future of Ethics, Law, and the Value of Human Behavior. In April, 2008 he was awarded TV Ontario's Big Ideas Best Lecturer in Ontario Award. In August, 2008, he was honoured with the Canadian Humanist of the Year Award from the Humanist Association of Canada. In September, 2008, he was awarded the UOIT Complementary Faculty Teaching Award. Dr. DiCarlo is the Principal of Critical Thinking Solutions, an educational consulting business for individuals, corporations, and not-for-profits in both the private and public sectors. He is also the developer of the first Pilot Project in Canada to introduce Universal Critical Thinking skills into the Ontario Public High School curriculum which has begun in the Upper Grand District School Board. These skills have since been developed into The Critical Thinking Project – an International Education Program – and have been adopted in Schools in Guatemala, Rwanda, Uganda, and Ghana with further interest in China, Colombia, Brazil, Afghanistan, and Iran.

**DOCTOR, Khushnuma:**

Ms. Khushnuma Doctor completed her Bachelors in Architectural Science from Ryerson University. She worked for 3.5 years with TD Bank in their Architectural/Real Estate Dept, 6 years with PCL/Aecon JV on the Pearson Airport Terminal 1 Redevelopment Project. Khushnuma was a Construction Superintendent with PCL for 8 years, and with Dominus Construction for 1 year. Since the end of 2016, she has been a Finishing Superintendent with Tridel. When Khushnuma was younger, she participated in various Youth ZSO (Zoroastrian Society of Ontario) events, and helped with the Toronto Youth Congress in the '90s. She has volunteered for a few years on the ZSO Entertainment committee. And for 3 years, Khushnuma volunteered on the joint OZCF/ZSO Entertainment committee. Ms. Doctor has been a Director on the OZCF Board on three occasions: '08-'10, '10-'12, and currently '16-'18.

**FOLTZ, Richard:**

Dr. Richard Foltz is Professor in the Department of Religions and Cultures at Concordia University. Dr. Foltz received his Ph.D. in Middle Eastern History from Harvard University. He also holds degrees in Persian literature and applied linguistics from the University of Utah. He has taught at Kuwait University, Brown University, Columbia University, and the University of Florida. Prior to entering the academy, he worked for several years in Europe as a musician, film critic, and travel writer. The author of ten books and over one hundred scholarly articles, his work has appeared in more than a dozen languages. Currently,

Professor Foltz is a cultural historian specializing in the broader Iranian world at Concordia University's Department of Religions and Cultures. His most recent book is *Iran in World History* (Oxford University Press, 2016), which has also been published in a Persian edition (Entesharat-e Dibayeh, 2016) and will soon appear in Turkish (Inkilap Yayınları). He is currently preparing a book entitled *A History of the Tajiks: Iranians of the East*, which will be published by I.B. Tauris in 2018. Professor Foltz has also published *Religions of Iran: From Prehistory to the Present* (OneWorld Publications, 2013), and *Religions of the Silk Road: Premodern Patterns of Globalization* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Professor Foltz has emphasized the role of Iranians in the spread of culture in world history, particularly in the domain of religions. In particular, he sees the Silk Road as having arisen from the travels of traders who were mostly of Iranian background. Professor Foltz has moreover argued that, contrary to its mostly negative portrayals in the West today, Iranian civilization continues to occupy a foundational role in the identity of many Asian peoples, analogous to the importance of Classical civilization for the West: "Most of the cultures of Asia identify with Iran on some level, much as Westerners do with Greece and Rome." In addition to religions commonly associated with Iran such as Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Islam and the Baha'i faith, Foltz's work highlights the influence of Iranian ideas on Judaism, Buddhism and Christianity. His approach is syncretic, bringing together, in the words of Omid Safi, "many different bodies of scholarship which have rarely been placed side by side". Commenting on the broad sweep of Professor Foltz's attention to Iranian civilization, one reviewer noted that: "no scholar, save perhaps such giants as Ehsan Yarshater and Richard Frye, can claim a depth of knowledge of traditions as diverse and covering such a wide historical span". Apart from his work on Iranian history and civilization, Professor Foltz has played a formative role in the emergence of a new subfield of religious studies known as religion and ecology, having edited three seminal works in this area, including two collections devoted to Islam. Professor Foltz has also published ground-breaking work in the related field of religion and animal rights. He has also written on animals in Zoroastrianism.

**GANDHI, Homi:**

Mr. Homi Gandhi is president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA). He was FEZANA NGO's First Main Representative (2002-2014) to the UN in consultation with ECOSOC and at DPI. He co-chaired the FEZANA UN NGO subcommittee for the celebration of UNESCO declared 3000th anniversary of Zoroastrian Culture in 2003. From 2002 to 2008, Mr. Gandhi was president of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY). He served as member of the administrative council for ZAGNY's Good Life Religious Emblem program, which monitors awarding the Good Life Religious Emblem for the Boy Scouts of America. Mr. Gandhi retired from active corporate life after working for twenty years in public accounting and for twenty-five years in financial services industry regulation at the New York Stock Exchange and the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority. Mr. Gandhi is a member of Religions for Peace USA Council of Presidents and was Honorary Treasurer of the organization from 2009-2016. He is also Honorary President of Religions for Peace International World Council. He has participated in meetings of national and international interfaith leaders prior to Group of Eight and Group of Twenty summits, has presented papers at numerous conferences, and is active in community service. Mr. Gandhi has presented papers on Climate Control and Stewardship of Environment at the UN/DPI annual NGO conference and at the Parliament of World's Religions at Melbourne and Salt Lake City. In recognition of his community service, Mr. Gandhi was awarded Temple of Understanding's Interfaith Visionary Award (2010). He was also honored to ring the New York Stock Exchange Opening Bell (2004) in recognition of his significant service to the community.

**GAZDAR, Cyrus:**

Mr. Cyrus Gazdar is the current OZCF President, serving a third term on the Board (prior: Secretary, Vice-President). He has taught middle school for 19 years with the Peel District School Board. After having graduated with a B.A. and B.Ed., he travelled to teach for three years in Japan. There, he met his wife. They are proud parents of a lovely daughter who is currently in grade 11. OZCF has come a long way in its nascent history of 16 years. Our organization was formed on the principles of enriching and advancing our religion through tenets and observances which we affiliate with our faith. To ensure the flame remains forever lit, ground will soon be broken to consecrate a Place of Worship (Atash Kadeh).

**GIFFORD, Zerbanno:**

Mrs. Zerbanno Gifford is an author, human rights campaigner, and founder of the ASHA Centre a charity working for the empowerment of young people, sustainable development and peace & reconciliation worldwide. Zerbanoo holds the International Woman of the Year Award 2006 for her humanitarian work, which spans fifty years of grassroots and global activism. Presented the Nehru Centenary Award, she is a pioneer for Asian Women in politics. She has chaired commissions, advised the British Home Secretary. Director of Anti-Slavery International, she was given the Freedom of Lincoln, Nebraska, for combating slavery. Author of seven books, her own biography '*An Uncensored Life*' by Farida Master is published by Harper Collins.

**HAYHOE, Ruth:**

Dr. Ruth Hayhoe is Professor at OISE (the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education), at the University of Toronto. Her professional engagements in Asia have spanned 35 years, including foreign expert at Fudan University (1980-82), First Secretary for Education, Science and Culture at the Canadian Embassy in Beijing (1989-1991), visiting professor at Nagoya University on a Japan Foundation fellowship in 1996, and Director of the Hong Kong Institute of Education, now the Education University of Hong Kong (1997-2002). Dr. Hayhoe has authored or edited more than a dozen books and published about 80 articles in refereed journals. Her most recent co-edited books include *Religion and Education: Comparative and International Perspectives* (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2018), *Comparative and International Education: Issues for Teachers* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2017) and *Canadian Universities in China's Transformation: An Untold Story* (Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 2016). *China through the Lens of Comparative Education: The Selected Works of Ruth Hayhoe*, came out in 2015 with Routledge's World Library of Educationalists. Other recent books include *Portraits of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Chinese Universities: In the Move to Mass Higher Education*, co-authored with Jun Li, Jing Lin and Qiang Zha (Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong [CERC] and Springer, 2011) and *Portraits of Influential Chinese Educators* (Hong Kong: CERC and Springer, 2006). Dr. Hayhoe has received many honors, including Honorary Fellow, University of London Institute of Education (1998), the Silver Bauhinia Star of the Hong Kong SAR Government (2002), Commandeur dans l'ordre des Palmes Académiques of the Government of France (2002) and an Honorary Doctorate from the Hong Kong Institute for Education (HKIEd) (2002). In 2011, Dr. Hayhoe was made an Honorary Fellow of the Comparative and International Education Society. In 2015 she received the Mingyuan Prize for an Outstanding Contribution to Chinese Education Research and an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the Open University of Hong Kong. Ruth has an active doctoral thesis group, whose members have done sustained field research on higher education issues in all of the following jurisdictions: China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, France, Belgium, Estonia, Norway, Greenland, Tanzania, South Africa, Venezuela, Iraq and the U.A.E., as well as Canada and the USA.

**HOMAVAZIR, Armaity:**

Ms. Armaity Homavazir has been involved with the Zoroastrian community from the time she joined the Youth Group at age 13. Ironically, in some circles, she is still considered a youth - even today! She has been part of the organizing committees for congresses in Toronto, and spoken and contributed to North American congresses since 1986. Armaity is also the founder and director of Camp Pardis which ran for two summers in 1996 and 1998 for 6 weeks each. The project involved children, youth, parents and seniors and garnered government funding for creating jobs for the youth. While living in the UK, Armaity got involved with the YZs and taught Religion classes. A few years ago, she also taught Religion classes in Toronto. Over the years, Armaity has also been involved with Next Gen Now and spoken and moderated several of their events geared at leadership and vision. Armaity lives and teaches in Toronto and cares deeply for the Zoroastrian community. She is hopeful through forums like the AVI, our community will have a clearer understanding of the issues that have brought us here today.

**HINTZE, Almut:**

Dr. Almut Hintze is Zartoshty Brothers Professor of Zoroastrianism at SOAS, University of London, and Fellow of the British Academy. Her field is Zoroastrianism and ancient and middle Iranian languages. Major publications include a study of the semantics of words for 'reward' in Vedic and Avestan (2000), commentaries and annotated editions of Zoroastrian sacred texts, such as the Avestan *Zamyād Yašt* (1994) and the *Yasna Hap-tanghaiti* (2007), and, with Dastur F M Kotwal, a facsimile edition of the Khorde Avesta and *Yašt* manuscript E1. She currently directs a collaborative project on the Multime-dia *Yasna*, funded by European Research Council (2016–2021), to produce an interactive film of a complete performance of the *Yasna* ritual, electronic tools for editing *Aves-tan* texts, and a text-critical edition, translation, commentary and dictionary of the *Aves-tan Yasna*.

**KANTER, Daniel:**

Rev. Dr. Daniel C. Kanter is the Senior Minister of First Unitarian Church of Dallas. He is the author of the book, *Faith for the Unbeliever*, released in 2017 and is working on another book called *Navigating Grief*. Daniel has a B.A. in Psychology and Asian Area Studies from the University of Vermont, a Masters of Divinity from Starr King School for the Ministry, and a Doctorate of Ministry from Perkins Theological School at Southern Methodist University. He has been the President of the Senior Ministers of Large UU Churches of the United States as well as a part of a Unitarian Universalist Association task force to define ministerial competency. He has lived in places such as Madurai, Tamil Nadu in Southern India, Bodh Gaya in Northern India, and traveled widely. He works in coalition with Faith Forward Dallas, a multi-faith action group addressing racial equity, poverty and education in Dallas and is involved in numerous efforts for women's rights in America.

**KILBY, Karen:**

Dr. Karen Kilby is the Bede Professor of Catholic Theology at The Centre for Catholic Studies, of Durham University in the United Kingdom. Dr. Kilby is a native of Connecticut, who studied Mathematics and Theology at Yale university, and then Cambridge university, completing her PhD on the theology of Karl Rahner. After holding a Gifford postdoctoral research fellowship at St Andrews, Dr. Kilby taught at Birmingham University, and then Nottingham University where she also served as Head of the Theology and Religious Studies Department. In her research and writing Prof. Kilby has engaged closely with two of the major twentieth century Catholic theologians, Karl Rahner, and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Prof. Kilby is the author of three highly regarded monographs: *Balthasar: a (very) critical introduction* (Eerdmans, 2012); *A Brief Introduction to Karl Rahner* (SPCK, 2007); and *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (2004). In addition to 20<sup>th</sup> century Catholic theology, Prof. Kilby is interested in a range of themes in systematic

theology, including in particular the doctrine of the Trinity, questions of sin and suffering, and the place of mystery in Christian thought. She served for a period as review editor of the International Journal of Systematic Theology, as one of the editors of the Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology (2011), as President of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain (2010-2012) and is currently President of the Society for the Study of Theology. She has been a member of the Nottingham Diocese's Ecclesiastical Education Commission.

**LIGHTSEY, Pamela:**

Rev. Dr. Pamela Lightsey notes that she understands her spirituality as unbounded and nurtured by her experiences living in numerous contexts and being inspired by diverse faith traditions. The Rev. Dr. Pamela Lightsey joined Meadville Lombard Theological School (MLTS) in January 2018. Prior to her appointment, Dr. Lightsey served as Associate Dean of Community Life and Lifelong Learning, and Clinical Assistant Professor of Contextual Theology and Practice, at the Boston University School of Theology. Dr. Lightsey's diverse experience offers a rich interdisciplinary mix of life experience, and professional proficiency. Following service in the US Army, and work as a civil servant, she received her academic and theological training at Columbus State University (BS), then the Gammon Seminary of the Inter-denominational Theological Center (M.Div.), followed by the Garrett-Evangelical Theological School at Northwestern University (PhD). After ordination, Rev. Dr. Lightsey served first as a United Methodist congregational pastor and then as a theological school educator, scholar, and administrator. Throughout her vocational life, she has been a leading social justice activist, working with local, national and international organizations focusing primarily on the causes of peacemaking, racial justice, and LGBTQ rights. Rev. Dr. Lightsey's publications include the book, *Our Lives Matter: A Womanist Queer Theology* (Wipf and Stock), "He Is Black and We are Queer" in *Albert Cleage Jr and the Black Madonna and Child* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), "Reconciliation" in *Prophetic Evangelicals: Envisioning a Just and Peaceable Kingdom* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), and "If There Should Come a Word" in *Black United Methodists Preach!* (Abingdon Press). Rev. Dr. Lightsey is attracted to the culture of innovation towards a commitment to contextual theological education. She notes that she is as comfortable with the mysteries of life, as she is with the ever-revealing nature of Creation. As an activist who was – and continues to be – nurtured by the teachings of civil rights leaders like Ruby Sales and Gil Caldwell, Rev. Dr. Lightsey believes that humanity is interconnected. This means, having a responsibility to the world to agitate for justice; while, importantly, also having a responsibility not to lose love for the human soul and human dignity in the midst of that work. Rev. Dr. Lightsey believes that people are more than any single category to which they are identified.

**LOUCHAKOVA-SCHWARTZ, Olga:**

Dr. Olga Louchakova-Schwartz, M.D., Ph.D., is a visiting scholar at GTU, and Founding President of the Society for the Phenomenology of Religious Experience and a Chair of Philosophy of the Religion unit at AARWR (American Academy of Religion, Western Division). She is Professor of Philosophy of Religion, Spirituality, and Human Development at the Hult International Business School, and, as a former medical neuroscientist, a volunteer clinical professor at the Department of Public Health Sciences at UC Davis. Her chief research interests are in religious determinants of health and migration, the problem of first person experience in religious evidence, and foundational theological problems of possibility and necessity in the human knowledge of God. Along with being a meditation teacher and spiritual counselor, she has chaired more than forty doctoral dissertations, and has published more than a hundred peer-reviewed papers and book chapters, including interpretive commentaries on the Catholic philosophy of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. Her forthcoming book, *The Problem of Religious Experience: Case Studies in Phenomenology*, Springer, is to appear at the end of 2018.

**MARSHALL, Charlene:**

Ms. Charlene Marshall is employed at CAMH (The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health), within the Psychogeriatric Resource Consultation Program. Charlene has a Masters in Social Work, and is a Registered Social Worker. Charlene is also a lecturer within the Justice Studies programme at the University of Guelph-Humber. She has had previous experience within the areas of corrections and policing, pertaining to the treatment, documentation, and evaluation of victims of abuse, crime, and addiction. Charlene notes that when she tells a new acquaintance where she works, they often share a story about someone in their life who lives with mental illness. Usually, their friend, colleague or loved one has experienced obstacles to care, or has not had an optimal response to treatment. Despite great progress, our treatments, our care models and our healthcare system are not meeting the needs of mental health patients. Why? Because of three big gaps: an applied information gap, a justice gap and an advocacy gap. This means that people with mental illness do not have timely access to evidence informed care and social supports. It means that there is suboptimal investment in the discovery and innovation required for advances in treatment for mental illness. At CAMH, the Vision Statement is "Transforming Lives." And CAMH lists as its "Strategic Direction Number Six", to Drive Social Change. But CAMH realizes that in order to realize this, part of its Vision2020, that a substantive transformation in attitudes, in how society thinks about and responds to its citizens with mental illness, is required. We must not stand silent when the human, the civil and the healthcare rights of people with mental illness are not recognized and respected. Therefore, advocacy is deeply embedded in the CAMH mission.

**MASAEWI, Mahmoud**

Dr. Mahmoud Masaewi is Visiting Professor at the University of Ottawa. He has pursued a Ph.D. in Political Science and another one in Philosophy (PhD-ABD). Mahmoud completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Saint Paul University concerning the Ethics and International Relations. His areas of research and teaching include Global Ethics, Global Justice, Ethics of Global Development, and Hermeneutics of the Selfhood. He also holds a special interest in mysticism and spirituality. Mahmoud has published books on the causes of terrorism with a concentration on ethics and religion, as well as ethics and uneven development. He is a passionate advocate of dialogical ethics, recognition as justice, and global justice. Mahmoud is the Founder and the Executive Director of Alternative Perspectives and Global Concerns (ap-gc.net) which is a global not-for-profit network of ethicist and spiritualist think-thanks searching for responses to global concerns. He has organized 12 international conferences around the topic of global concerns from the alternative perspectives of ethics and spirituality. Mahmoud has been an Ambassador of the Parliament of the World's Religions for three consecutive terms. He is a Member of the Dances of Universal Peace. He has served on the editorial board for *Philosophy Study and Religion and Conflict*.

**MEHRI, Rastin:**

Dr. Rastin Mehri obtained his PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), in the University of London, U.K., under the supervision of Professor Almut Hintze and Professor John Hinnells. He obtained his BFA, BA and an MA from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. He is currently a lecturer in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada. His research interests include the history, literature and social situation of the Middle Eastern and South Asian Diaspora in British Columbia, Canada.

**MÉNDEZ-MONTOYA, Ángel Francisco:**

Dr. Ángel Francisco Méndez Montoya was born in Baja California. He moved to Mexico City, to study philosophy at university. However while he was there, he began to study contemporary dance and this became very important in his life, alongside philosophy. His natural talent attracted the attention of a

professional dance company in Mexico City, who invited him to join them. For a time, he danced professionally under the guidance of the company's award-winning choreographer. While performing in Austin with this dance company, he was talent spotted and invited by the director of the dance department at the University of Texas (UT) to move to Austin and pursue an undergraduate degree in dance and liberal arts. During these years in Austin, he came across the work of the Dominican painter, Fra Angelico, which resonated with his interest in the arts as an expression of God's beauty and he became very interested in a spirituality of the arts. He was very attracted by the idea of a religious person who was also an artist, able to integrate art with faith and preaching. It was then that Ángel found the Dominican friars of St. Martin de Porres. This community of friars hosted a kind of postulancy or lay community in which students could live alongside the friars and share their life. Ángel learnt to cook, which became another passion of his life. In 1993, Ángel joined the Southern Dominican Province of the USA. Ángel eventually earned three Masters degrees, in Divinity, Theology, and Philosophy, at St Louis University. He also continued to pursue dance and was a guest artist at Washington University where he taught and danced, and, he engaged in pastoral work with migrant communities. At this time Ángel began to experiment with integrating dance with theology, being inspired by St Dominic's Nine Ways of Prayer; that "With dance, the body is the instrument of self-expression. United with prayer, the body is the means of uniting with God. We don't put aside our body when praying, for prayer is intensely somatic (bodily)". He found that in praying with his body through dance, he was no longer performing on a stage, as he was accustomed to, but rather he experienced "moving beyond the ego ... praying and praising God with the body". In 2000 Ángel danced during Vespers on St Dominic's Day during the General Chapter of the Order. He recalls that "some were scandalised and walked out ... but many liked it and some were moved to tears". He noted that before the Enlightenment, the present day dichotomy of body and soul did not exist, and his studies led to the discovery of a tradition of liturgical dance that dated to the Patristic age. Ángel argues that "the post-modern discourse now criticizes the hegemony of reason and wants to return to the body", thus his work and preaching through dance is "an opportunity to recover the body-soul mutual constitution". Ángel also obtained a PhD in philosophical theology. His PhD took him from Virginia to Cambridge UK, where he was resident in the Dominican priory. There he was Scholar in Residence at the University's faculty of divinity. While in Cambridge he worked in Fisher House with a Bible Study group exploring food in the Bible. Upon completion of his doctoral dissertation, Ángel was invited to teach philosophy and theology at the Universidad Iberoamericana, a Jesuit-run university in Mexico City. He has been a professor there since 2007. Dr. Méndez-Montoya is the author of *The Theology of Food: Eating and the Eucharist*.

**MUTTA, Baldev:**

Mr. Baldev Mutta has been in the field of social work for the last 45+ years. He is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS). PCHS is a Health Service Provider in the Central West and Mississauga Halton LHIN geographic areas. He has worked for the last 28 years developing an integrated holistic model to address substance abuse, mental health and family violence in the South Asian community. He has received many community awards for his work on equity, community development, diversity management, and organizational change.

**NIYOZOV, Sarfaroz:**

Dr. Sarfaroz Niyozov was born in Tajikistan, and completed his Honors Degree in Arabic from Tajik State University in 1983. Subsequently, he worked and studied in Yemen, Syria, and Tunisia. Upon completing his graduate studies, Dr. Niyozov taught at both Dushanbe and Khorog Universities in Tajikistan. He relocated to Karachi and graduated with the first class of the IED (International Education Development) in 1995. Dr. Niyozov has worked on several of AKU's educational endeavors in Central Asia,

including on the establishment of the University of Central Asia. Dr. Niyozov was awarded a scholarship from the Aga Khan Foundation to pursue his PhD in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto, which he completed in 2001. His PhD research received best dissertation awards from the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) and the American Education Research Association (AERA, Division B). Dr. Niyozov founded and led the Central Asian Studies Unit at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, UK. In 2005, Dr. Niyozov joined the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. Currently, he is Associate Professor, Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning and his research, teaching, and supervision are focused on education and culture in the developing world (including the post-socialist context), and the education experiences of students from Muslim backgrounds in western schools and societies. He served as Co-Director of the Comparative, International and Development Education Center (CIDECA), and as an editor of the Journal of Curriculum Inquiry (OISE, University of Toronto). He has written extensively about education in post-Soviet countries and the experiences of teachers working with Muslim students in multicultural classrooms.

**O'LAOIRE, Séán:**

Father Dr. Séán O'Laoire completed his B.Sc. in Mathematics from the National University of Ireland. In 1972, he was ordained a Catholic priest. The next 14 years were spent in among the Kalejin people of East Africa, on mission. Father O'Laoire earned a Ph.D. in Transpersonal Psychology and became a licenced psychotherapist. His research is focused on the effect of prayer. In the process of all this learning, Father Dr. O'Laoire learned six languages. He is the co-founder of Companions on the Journey (COJ), which is a spiritual community that acknowledges the divinity within all. COJ is a non-hierarchical Eucharistic community which is dedicated to healing the fractures between peoples. COJ believes that each individual's spirituality is directly proportional to their experience of God, illuminated by the teachings of Christ, as well as the spiritual teachings of other traditions. His scientific research on prayer has been published in three psychology journals. In 1984, while living in Kenya, he wrote, "Ukweli Ni Nini?" (What does Truth Mean?) He published, "Spirits in Spacesuits: A Manual for Everyday Mystics," in 2003. "Souls on Safari: A Guided Tour of Mystical Wisdom" was published in 2006, and translated into German and published in Germany in 2007 as "Seelen auf Safari. In 2008, Father O'Laoire wrote "A Sensible God".

**PANAINO, Antonio Clemente Domenico:**

Professor Antonio C. D. Panaino is Full Professor of Iranian Studies at the "Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna" and he is presently Dean of the "Faculty for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage" in Ravenna, where also the "Ilya and Lisbeth Gershevitch Library" is located according to the generous wish of this scholar. The same Faculty has acquired the "J. P. Asmussen Library", which is presently at disposal of the consultants. Prof. Panaino has been Secretary and, then, President of the Societas Iranologica Europaea. Presently he is Director of the Emilia-Romagna branch of the Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient. He has founded with other scholars the International Association «MELAMMU» dedicated to the study of the intercultural phenomena in antiquity with special regard for the heritage of the Assyrian and Babylonian cultures. Prof. Panaino is the Director of the Italian Scientific Mission in Tajikistan. He studied at the State University of Milan and, then, obtained his PHD at the Oriental Institute of Naples with a thesis on the Avestan hymnology. He also studied in Cambridge (Jesus College), London (SOAS), Belgium (Liège). Prof/ Panaino's research interests are: 1) Avestan and generally Mazdean literatures; 2) the history of religions in Pre-Islamic Iran; 3) the mutual influences between Byzantium and the Sasanian; 4) Astronomy and Astrology in the ancient world; 5) Ethnolinguistics of the Yagnobi and of the Iranian area. 6) Preservation of the ethno-cultural heritage in areas of crisis and conflict. Professor Panaino has been visiting professor in many European Universities and Academies [Harvard, Yale, Brown, London, Collège de France (Paris), Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Paris), etc.].

He is author of various books and more than two hundred scientific contributions. During the last years the research activities of Prof. Panaino have been directed not only towards those scientific areas he loves most, like Avestan philology, Iranian religious history and Pre-Islamic astral culture, but also towards the political dynamics coming out from the meeting between Mazdeism and other religions like Christianity and Manichaeism. Furthermore, paying specific attention to the study of the role of queens in Late Antiquity. And a series of targeted studies on the relations between the Sasanian and the Byzantine worlds. Specifically also, the multicultural implications of the cycles concerning the Evangelic Magi in Christ's Nativity and their role as messengers of a foreign culture. On this subject he has written two books and many other articles, and he is actually preparing a *Namenbuch* dedicated to the names of the Magi in the various traditions as well as other studies concerning different aspects of the three (but, sometimes, also twelve) Wise men coming from the Orient, as symbol of intercultural mediation not only between Christianity and Mazdeism, but between East and West. Prof. Panaino is also an infantry lieutenant in the reserve forces of the Italian Army.

**PANTHAKI, Armaan:**

Ervad Armaan Panthaki is 20 years old, and currently enrolled in the Mechatronics Engineering and Management program at McMaster University. Armaan completed his navar ceremony in December of 2008, making this the 10 year anniversary of becoming a mobed.

**PANTHAKI, Farhan:**

Ervad Farhan Panthaki completed his Navar ceremony in India in 2004, and has since participated in numerous religious functions, while also completing his academic qualifications in Canada. Graduating from the University of Waterloo with a BASc in Mechanical Engineering, Farhan currently works at Apple in California, supporting iPhone Operations.

**PANTHAKI, Kamran:**

Ervad Kamran Panthaki is a senior in the Bachelor of Technology program at McMaster University, studying Automation Engineering Technology. When he's not studying he likes to read, play videogames, longboard, and play guitar. He was ordained a Navaar in 2008, at Dadar Agiary and has been active at the OZCF since.

**PANTHAKI, Neville Gustad:**

Dr. Neville Panthaki is a Canadian born Parsi Zoroastrian. Neville was fortunate to have studied Zoroastrianism and comparative religion with Dr. Willard Oxtoby. Neville was awarded his Ph.D. in Social Justice Education, from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), at the University of Toronto. His doctorate was undertaken with two other Joint Collaborative programs: the Munk School of Global Affairs—Asian Institute’s Centre for South Asian Studies (CSAS), and Comparative, International Development Education (CIDE). Neville also possesses an M.A., and a Ph.D. (ABD) from the Department of History at York University, and a Graduate Diploma in International and Security Studies (York, Political Science). This affords him an interdisciplinary and transnational comparative perspective within his scope for research and teaching. He has a University Teaching Diploma and a B.Ed., both from York University. Neville’s research/publications investigate curriculum as communication, pedagogy, identity and belonging; within the context of intercultural history, historical theology, and social justice. He is the Creator and Director of the Asha Vahishta Initiative (AVI), and the Chair of the AVI Conference.

**PANTHAKI, Mahiyar:**

Mr. Mahiyar Panthaki is a Chartered Accountant by qualification and banker by profession. Mahiyar has been working for over 30 years and has been fortunate to have had the opportunity to work in several countries such as: India, Dubai, UAE, Kenya, Hong Kong, Philippines. He has been based in Canada for the last 17 years. While working in different geographies / cultures, he noticed that religion appears to highlight differences rather than unify people which is ironic, as most people have similar values and aspirations.

**PANTHAKY, Jal:**

Ervad Jal Panthaky was born in Ahmedabad , and brought up in Nargol (Gujarat) where his father acted as a ‘panthaky’. Jal became Nāvar at age 11 and Marātab at 12. Moving to Mumbai, Jal completed a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering. He worked for Voltas and Glaxo Laboratories. Jal moved to Canada in 1967, working in an electrical mechanical contracting firm as a supervisor, and for the City of Toronto Exhibition Place as Operations Manager. He also did consulting work for various companies in Health and Safety Training until 2017. Ervad Panthaky was a founding Director of the Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF), and has also served as President, Secretary and Director with portfolio. Ervad Panthaky is a lifetime member of NAMC (North American Mobed Council), and a registered Minister of Solemnizing Marriage in the Province of Ontario. Ervad Panthaky has transliterated from Gujarati into English the higher liturgical prayers of: Yazashne, Visperad, Vandīdād, Yazashne Rapithvan, and Yazashne-Concise. Uniquely, this includes passages and chapters that are otherwise not printed in other books and instead marked as “Jawat”. Jal and his wife Meher, have four children, and four grand-children.

**RAFFAElli, Enrico:**

Dr. Enrico Giuseppe Raffaelli did his undergraduate studies at the University of Rome "La Sapienza", specializing in Iranian studies, with a focus on Zoroastrianism and the languages of pre-Islamic Iran. He did his PhD studies on Zoroastrianism between 1999 and 2004 in conjunction between the University of Naples "L'Orientale" and the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes Section of Religious Sciences of Paris. *L'oroscopo del mondo* deals with astrology in Zoroastrianism, its relation with Mesopotamian, Classical and Indian astrology, and its influence on Islamic astrology. He has also published several articles and book chapters on astrology in pre-Islamic Iran, and on the Avestan and Middle Persian literature. *The Sih-rozag in Zoroastrianism* focused on the Avestan and Pahlavi versions of the *Sih-rozag*, a text worshipping Zoroastrian divine entities. It includes an edition, translation and hilological and historico-religious commentary of the two versions of the text. Enrico G. Raffaelli's present areas of interest include the history of pre-Islamic Iranian literature, with a particular focus on the Avestan ritual texts, and on the Middle Persian texts of the Apocalyptic genre.

**RAHMANIAN, Hamid:**

Mr. Hamid Rahamanian is a 2014 John Guggenheim Fellow. His work centers on film and graphic arts. His work has been exhibited in international competitions and publications. His narrative and documentary films have premiered at Venice, Sundance, Toronto, Tribeca, and IDFA film festivals. He has won numerous international awards and his works have been televised on international networks, including PBS, Sundance Channel, IFC, Channel 4, BBC, DR2, and Al Jazeera. Mr. Rahamanian undertook the immense task of illustrating and commissioning a new translation and adaptation of the tenth-century Persian epic poem Shahnameh by Ferdowsi, entitled *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings*. This best-selling 600-page art book, which the Wall Street Journal lauded as a “masterpiece,” was published by the Quantuck Lane Press in 2013. His artwork from the book has been exhibited and purchased by several museums. Mr. Rahamanian created a cinematic shadow play for the theater based on the love story of

Zaul and Rudabeh from the Shahnameh, entitled FEATHERS OF FIRE: A PERSIAN EPIC, which premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2016. He recently completed a pop-up book, entitled, ZAHAAK: THE LEGEND OF THE SERPENT KING, to be released in 2018 through Fantagraphics Books in English and French. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.

**RAMBACHAN, Anantanand:**

Dr. Anantanand Rambachan is a Professor of Religion, Philosophy, and Asian Studies, at Saint Olaf College, Minnesota, USA, where he has been teaching since 1985. Dr. Rambachan received his Ph.D. and M.A. (with Distinction) degrees from the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, at the University of Leeds, in the United Kingdom. He completed his undergraduate studies at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad. Prof. Rambachan is the author of several books, book-chapters and articles in scholarly journals. Among his books are, *Accomplishing the Accomplished*, *The Limits of Scripture*, *The Advaita Worldview: God, World and Humanity*, *The Hindu Vision*, *Gitamrtam: The Essential Teachings of the Bhagavadgita*, and *A Hindu Theology of Liberation*. His writings include a series of commentaries on the *Ramayana*. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) transmitted a series of 25 lectures by Prof. Rambachan around the world. Prof. Rambachan has been involved in the field of interreligious relations and dialogue for over twenty-five years, as a Hindu participant and analyst. He has contributed to numerous consultations and discussions convened by national and international organizations concerned with interreligious issues. He is very active in the dialogue programs of the World Council of Churches, and was a Hindu guest and participant in the last four General Assemblies of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver (Canada), Canberra (Australia), Harare (Zimbabwe), and Puerto Alegre (Brazil). Dr. Rambachan is also a regular participant in the consultations of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue at the Vatican, and an educator on interfaith issues in Minnesota. Prof. Rambachan has served on the Advisory Board of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at Victoria University (Canada), and is a member of the Consultation on Population and Ethics. He is currently an advisor to the Pluralism Project at Harvard University, a member of the International Advisory Council for the *Tony Blair Faith Foundation (UK)*, and a member of the Theological Education Committee of the American Academy of Religion. In April 2008, Professor Rambachan, at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury delivered the distinguished Lambeth Lecture at Lambeth Palace, London. He has contributed as a Hindu scholar to the joint United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) – Global Network of Religions for Children project (GNRC) entitled "Children in World Religions." He was awarded the Chaconia Gold Medal (1989) by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for his public service. Prof. Rambachan delivered the invocation address at the historic White House Celebration of the Hindu festival of Diwali in 2003 and also in 2004. He has been presenter in the Distinguished Speaker Series at the University of Victoria (Center for Studies in Religion and Society) and delivered keynote addresses at the Ceremonial Opening of the Supreme Court of Judicature of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, in 2001 and 2006. Prof. Rambachan has traveled and lectured in many part of the world and teaches regularly at several Hindu temples in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. He resides with his family in Apple Valley, Minnesota.

**REDDY, Srinivas:**

Dr. Srinivas Reddy is a scholar, translator and musician. He studied classical sitar in the traditional *guru-shishya* style with Sri Partha Chatterjee, disciple of the late sitar maestro Pandit Nikhil Banerjee. Srinivas also trained in classical South Asian languages and literatures at Brown University and UC Berkeley. He has released three independent CDs and published three books of Indian poetry in English translation with Penguin Books. Currently Srinivas is Visiting Professor of Religious Studies and Contemplative Studies at Brown University where he explores the intersection of religious practice, mystical poetry and devotional

music. He lives in Rhode Island and spends his time performing, teaching and conducting research around the world.

**RENDÓN, Laura:**

Dr. Laura I. Rendón is a student advocate, education scholar and consultant. A native of Laredo, Texas, Rendón's work has focused on reducing educational inequalities connected to college access, persistence and graduation of low-income, first-generation students. Rendón developed "validation theory," which has been extensively employed by scholars and educational organizations as the framework to work with underserved student populations. Rendón is also a teaching and learning thought leader in the area of contemplative education. She is the author of the book, *Sentipensante (Sensing/Thinking Pedagogy): Educating for Wholeness, Social Justice and Liberation*. Further, Rendón is author or editor of numerous books, journal articles and practice and policy papers, including her new book (edited with Vijay Kanagalal) *The Latino Student Guide to STEM Careers*. Rendón is currently Professor Emerita and Co-Director of the Center for Research and Policy in Education at University of Texas-San Antonio. She is a Fellow of the Mind and Life Institute and former Fellow of the Fetzer Institute. Rendón is also on the Board of the John N Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education. In 2013 the Texas Diversity Council awarded Rendón the title of being one of the Most Powerful and Influential Women in Texas. Rendón's archives can be found at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection Library, University of Texas-Austin.

**SAMUEL, Joshua:**

Dr. Rev. Joshua Samuel is an adjunct lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies at the Marymount Manhattan College, New York. Samuel completed his PhD at the Union Theological Seminary, New York, working with the likes of Dr. James Cone, Dr. Cornel West and Dr. Paul F. Knitter, among others. Samuel's doctoral dissertation and upcoming book (Leiden: Brill) weaves Hindu-Christian comparative theology and Dalit liberation theology to construct a comparative theology of liberation focusing on embodied divine experiences (better known as "divine possessions") among Hindu and Christian Dalits. His research interests include Interreligious Dialogue, modern history of religion (and secularism) and the conceptualization of justice in "world religions." Samuel is also an ordained minister of the Church of South India and currently serves as a priest in the Episcopal Church of America.

**SCHWARTZ, Martin:**

Dr. Martin Schwartz. Coming from undergraduate interests in Indo-European/ historical linguistics, Classics, and ancient Near Eastern cultures at the City College of New York, became a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, under the mentorly ægis of the great and inspiring Iranist Prof. Walter B. Henning from 1962-1967, upon whose untimely death I finished my PhD degree (with a dissertation on Christian Sogdian) with the help of another important Iranist, Henning's student and contemporary Dr. Ilya Gershevitch in 1968. From 1968 to 1970 I taught Iranistics and Sanskrit at Columbia University, and from 1970-2010/2011 I taught Iranian Studies at UC Berkeley, since which I have been Professor Emeritus there, and have kept on researching and publishing. My publications have ranged over all aspects of Iranian Studies, but I regard my most important and exciting work to be innovative study of the Gathas of Zarathushtra (Zoroaster), which I consider the most intellectually intricate, ingenious and consequential poetry in the history of world literature.

**SHEKEL, Michal:**

Rabbi Michal Shekel is the spiritual leader at Har Tikvah Jewish Synagogue. She is also the Executive Director of the Toronto Board of Rabbis, the Rabbinic Director of the Reform Beit Din and Jewish Information class, and is the *mesaderet gittin* (divorce officiant) for the Reform Rabbis of Greater Toronto

Beit Din. She also teaches adult classes in Toronto covering a variety of Jewish topics and leads a monthly Torah study group. Rabbi Shekel is the original co-editor of the holiday section of myjewishlearning.com. She also spent four years writing the weekly on-line Torah study for Kolel. She is the author of numerous textbooks used in Jewish schools throughout North America and has contributed articles to a variety of Jewish publications. She is currently a regular contributor to the Parashat HaShavuah column in the Canadian Jewish News. Over the course of her career, Rabbi Shekel has served as a board member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and as the Chairperson of the Reform Rabbis of Greater Toronto. She has also been on the boards of organizations dealing with Jewish continuity and education, outreach, interfaith issues, inclusion, racism, and drug and substance abuse.

**SHERINE, Ariane:**

Ms. Ariane Sherine is an author, journalist, comedy writer and musical comedian. Ariane started writing for television at age 22, after coming runner-up in the BBC Talent New Sitcom Writers' Award. She wrote for the BBC comedy shows: My Family, Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps, The Story of Tracy Beaker, and Space Pirates; as well as ITV1's, The New Worst Witch, and Channel 4's, Countdown. Ms. Sherine then moved into journalism, writing extensively for The Guardian, as well as The Sunday Times, The Observer, The Spectator, The Telegraph, NME (New Musical Express), New Humanist, The Independent, and Independent on Sunday. Ariane wrote the cover feature, for The Spectator's historic all-female cover, in August 2016. Ms. Sherine was also the inspiration who created, successfully organized and directed the Atheist Bus Campaign. This saw 800 buses with the slogan 'There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life', run across the UK in January 2009. Ms. Sherine's campaign then went global, running in 13 countries across the world (including in Toronto, Canada). It succeeded in generating the most national and international press of any advertising campaign that year. As a result, Ariane edited the bestselling book The Atheist's Guide to Christmas, which featured contributions from celebrities including Richard Dawkins, Derren Brown, David Baddiel, Simon Le Bon, Brian Cox, Charlie Brooker, Ed Byrne, Simon Singh, Jenny Colgan, Natalie Haynes and AC Grayling. Ariane is currently writing a new book, Talk Yourself Better: A Confused Person's Guide to Therapy, Counselling and Self-Help, which will be published by Robinson (Little, Brown) in October 2018. Funny and accessible, it will feature Q&As about counselling, and interviews with therapists, along with interviews about experiencing therapy from celebrities including Stephen Fry, Charlie Brooker and David Baddiel.

**SIDHWA, Phil:**

Mr. Phil Sidhwa is owner, President and CEO, ORGATEC Energy Inc. Phil is also the Chair and Organizer of the OZCF (Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation) project to establish an Atash Kadeh (a consecrated place of worship). He was a founding member of OZCF and has also previously held positions of President and Vice-President of the OZCF. Phil has a combined 30 years of experience in public works infrastructure development, management and operations. He has specialized in public-private partnerships in the renewable energy and water sectors. Phil has led large international enterprises within North America, South America, and Asia. He has worked with all sectors and levels of government, promoting environmental ethics. He is currently the president of the Oakville shrine club.

**SMALLER, Christine:**

Rev. Christine Smaller is minister at Birchcliff Bluffs United Church in Scarborough (Toronto). She is also a PhD Candidate in theology (U of T), studying the discipline of homiletics. Her research investigates how the power of humour facilitates the communication of theological and spiritual wisdom in the pulpit and the public square. Christine has completed her Masters in Divinity (M.Div) and her Masters in Pastoral Studies (MPS). Rev. Smaller is part of the Emmanuel College faculty for the MPS graduate programme of

the University of Toronto. Christine is also a Fellow in the Teaching for Ministry Program. She lives in the west-end of Toronto with her almost grown children, husband, and twin cats.

**SNELLER, H.M. (Rico):**

Dr. Rico Sneller is assistant professor of Continental philosophy at the Institute for Philosophy at Leiden University. He studied theology in Utrecht and Leiden, and philosophy in Paris. His dissertation dealt with the problem of negative theology and the philosophy of Jacques Derrida. He was a board member of the European Societas Ethica, a society for academic research in ethics which organises annual conference throughout Europe. Together with Dr Mahmoud Masaeli (Ottawa) and Prof. Dr Jalil Roshandel (Seattle) he is the founder of a global initiative called Alternative Approaches and Global Issues (APGC); together they have organised several international conferences (in Ottawa, Washington, Leiden, North Carolina, Bogota, Foz do Iguaçu, New Delhi). Another common initiative is a book, co-authored with prof. Hans Gerding and Dr Hein van Dongen, on philosophers' approaches of exceptional human experiences, *Wild Beasts of the Philosophical Desert. Philosophers on Telepathy and Other Exceptional Experiences* (Cambridge Publishing 2014). He is board member of the *Journal for Religion and Violence, Logos. Revista de la Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades* (La Salle university, Bogota). He is also a member of the Cohen Gesellschaft, and the International Rosenzweig Society.

Rationality is widely acclaimed to be the victory of Western civilization over mythology, superstition, religion, if not over the 'under-developed' world as a whole. However, this victory has also been liable to severe critique. The so-called 'dialectics' of the Enlightenment – its reductive, distortive, or even destructive reverse side – has been at the very heart of philosophical thinking after Hegel. Rico Sneller researches how rationality might be adequately re-contextualised, and how justice can be done to other meaningful states of consciousness such as 'the unconscious', 'instinct', and 'spirituality'. He explores the philosophical viability of these strands of thought for a more adequate contemporary appreciation of human being in light of the global urgencies of our time, such as: questions of life and death, war and peace, impoverishment of experience, and moral nihilism.

**STANKOVIC, Pola:**

Dr. Pola Stankovic has her Ph.D. in Theatre and Performance Studies from York University. Her research interests include Canadian theatre history, modern European drama, European influences on actor training in Canada, and the influence of Style on performance, production, and the imagination. While completing her Ph.D., Dr. Stankovic trained classically as an actor with the Toronto Theatre Academy, with whom she continues to pursue her training in acting, directing, and teaching. She has performed, consulted, coached, and directed within Toronto's theatre scene and has had the privilege of working with Russian master clown Nikolai Terentiev (*Slava's Snowshow*), as well as award winning clown duo Heather Marie Annis and Amy Lee (Morro and Jasp), among others. Most recently, she acted in the film *Nursery Rhyme of a Madman*, a cinematic adaptation of the 1923 Absurdist play *Madman and the Nun* by Polish playwright Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, which made its debut at the Montreal Film Festival, and has been shown in France, Berlin, and Toronto.

**STONE, Jeff:**

Father Jeff Stone is the priest-in-charge at St. Jude's Anglican Church in Brampton. He is the father of one daughter (Imogen) and three sons (Elliott, Ciaran [pronounced Keer-ren], and August), whose ages range from ten years down to four years, respectively. Before his appointment to St. Jude, Bramalea North, Father Jeff was the interim associate priest at Our Saviour in Don Mills, and before that, the assistant curate and priest at Redeemer, Bloor Street, in Toronto. He has both a Master of Divinity degree and a Master of Pastoral Studies degree from the University of Toronto. Father Jeff has been a priest since

January 2015, and a deacon since May, 2014. Father Jeff loves to talk about God, play with his kids, play guitar, bike and walk, and follow the Blue Jays.

**SUSAJ, Jesu:**

Father Susai Jesu, is an Oblate Priest belonging to the Religious Order of 'The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate': acronym OMI. He was ordained to the Priesthood in the year 2000. He served five years among the Adivasi Communities in North India. He speaks Hindi fluently. He is from Tamil Nadu, in South India. After having completed his M.Sc. Psychology in Madras University, he came to Canada as missionary in the 2007. After 10 months of orientation into Native Ministry, he was appointed as pastor of Pelican Narrows, and Sandy Bay (both communities in northern Saskatchewan) and served there for almost eight years. It was there, with the help of the Native Elders, that Father Susai learnt to speak the Cree language. Father Susai completed his M.A. in Counselling and Spirituality at St. Paul's University in Ottawa. Since July 2017, he has been the Pastor of Sacred Heart Churches of the First Peoples, Catholic Church, in Edmonton, Alberta. Sacred Heart is the first designated National Parish for all First Nations peoples in Canada (including Metis, Inuit).

**TUMARKIN, Sivan:**

Mr. Sivan Tumarkin is a lawyer and co-founding partner of Samfiru Tumarkin LLP, a 20-lawyer firm that specializes in personal injury, disability and employment law, with offices in Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver. He obtained his BA from York University in psychology, and his LLB from Queen's University. He hosts a weekly radio show on topics pertaining to personal injury and disability law in Toronto and Ottawa, and appears regularly in various media outlets as a commentator on legal matters. Sivan spends his spare time with family and friends, cooking, as well as learning ancient Greek, pouring over ancient myths and history. But for life's unpredictable circumstances, he would have become a professor of classics (ancient Greece and Rome), an archeologist, or possibly a modern day oracle at Delphi.

**VAFADARI, Ariana:**

Ariana Vafadari was born in Iran and came to France, her mother's country at the age of five. She graduated as a civil engineer and then studied at the Academy of Music in Paris and at the Hanns Eisler Academy of Music in Berlin. She also took classes with Jack Waltzer at the Actor's Studio. Her opera roles include Nancy (Albert Herring by Britten), Dido and Sorceress (Dido and Aeneas by Purcell) with Stephen Stubbs and Jaap ter Linden, Nerone (L'Incoronazione di Poppea by Monteverdi) with Emmanuelle Haïm at the Academy of Muic of Paris, Proserpina (Orfeo by Monteverdi) with Philip Pickett at the Opera Studio for Lyon Opera, Dorabella (Così fan Tutte by Mozart) for Toulon Opera, Zaynab (Terre et Cendres by Jérôme Combier) for Lyon Opera, Leyla (Leyla et Madjnun by Arman Amar) for the opening of the Fez Festival and the Luxembourg Grand Theater. She has just sang in E-Vasione a creation of Philippe Talard in Firenze and in La Pellegrina in Dijon's Opera. Concert work includes many recitals with the great pianists Emmanuel Strosser, Claire Desert and Christian Ivaldi (Berlioz, Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Britten, Weill, Haendel, Debussy...) in Japan, Latvia, Germany and France. She also sang Mozart's Requiem with Vincent Barthes (ONPL), Les Chants d'Auvergne by Canteloube with the Auvergne Orchestra with Ari van Beek, the Folk Songs of Berio with Florent Boffard (toured in Brésil), Stabat Mater of Pergolese in the Salamanca Festival, Shéhérazade and the Hebrew's Mélodies of Ravel with Emmanuel Leducq-Barôme in Texas and Songs and Danses of Death of Moussorgsky with the Baltic Chamber Orchestra and the soloists of the Saint Petersbourg's Philharmonic Orchestra. She is also working as director assistant for Monteverdi's Orfeo (Opéra de Paris in 2016) or a musical creator with the stage director Julie Bérès for Lendemains de Fête and Petit Eyolf (MC2 of Grenoble, Theatre de la Ville of Paris,...), Ballet music Belle de Sommeil for Luxembourg's Theater and has done many recordings for the cinema. She gives high importance to her

iranien culture and has written songs on the Gathas, antic persan poems and the kurd Malek Jan's poetry. We have heard her with Habib Meftahboushehri, Arman Sigarchi or Leïli Anvar in Strasbourg or Fès (Sacred Music Festival), Théâtre de la Ville of Paris. Expressing her Franco-Iranian heritage, Vafadari composed every song from her Gathas recordings, according to radifs or oriental scales. It results in music that constantly vibrates between its Oriental mystic foundations and their matching Western opera. Ariana Vafadari and her musicians have a common trait, they unremittingly stretch musical boundaries. In perfect continuity with their cultural and musical backgrounds, they were trained by traditional Iranian, Ottoman and Moroccan music, jazz, Western classical music or opera, in their improvisations and the practice of their instruments, they travel freely from one world to the next.

**WIRZBA, Norman:**

Dr. Norman Wirzba is Professor of Theology, Ecology and Agrarian Studies, and a Senior Fellow at the Kenan Institute for Ethic, at Duke University. Dr. Wirzba pursues research and teaching interests at the intersections of theology, philosophy, ecology, and agrarian and environmental studies. He lectures frequently in Canada and the United States. His work focuses on understanding and promoting practices that can equip both rural and urban church communities to be more faithful and responsible members of creation. Current research is centered on a recovery of the doctrine of creation and a restatement of humanity in terms of its creaturely life. Professor Wirzba has published *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* and *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight*. His most recent books are *Way of Love: Recovering the Heart of Christianity, From Nature to Creation: A Christian Vision for Understanding and Loving Our World, Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*, and (with Fred Bahnson) *Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation*. He also has edited several books, including *The Essential Agrarian Reader: The Future of Culture, Community, and the Land* and *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*. Professor Wirzba serves as general editor for the book series *Culture of the Land: A Series in the New Agrarianism*, published by the University Press of Kentucky, and is co-founder and executive committee member of the Society for Continental Philosophy and Theology.

**WOODLEY, Randy:**

Dr. Randy Woodley, as an activist/scholar, distinguished lecturer and wisdom keeper, addresses a variety of issues concerning American culture, faith, our relationship with the earth and Indigenous realities. His expertise has been sought in national venues as diverse as *The Huffington Post, Moody Radio* and *Time Magazine*. Dr. Woodley is a legal descendent of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma. He has been involved in mentoring Indigenous leaders for three decades. Dr. Woodley (PhD Intercultural Studies) also serves as Distinguished Professor of Faith and Culture and Director of Intercultural and Indigenous Studies at George Fox Seminary in Portland, Oregon. Some of his books include *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*, 2012 (Eerdmans) and *Living in Color: Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity*, Intervarsity Press, 2004.