

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE



2020 MTA Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Conference

Overcoming 400 Years of Struggle ... and Still We Rise

Friday, Dec. 4

Saturday, Dec. 5

Saturday, Dec. 12

EMAC CONFERENCE AGENDA

Friday, Dec. 4

6-8 p.m.

- Tribal Land Acknowledgment Claudia A. Fox Tree, EMAC
- Indigenous Introduction Shauna Lee Manning, EMAC; American Indian/Alaska
Native Caucus of NEA, Northeast Director
- Welcome Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee members
- Introduction EMAC Chair Sharmese Gunn
- Opening Remarks..... NEA President Becky Pringle
- Introduction of Keynote Speaker MTA Vice President Max Page
- Conversation Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, moderated by MTA President Merrie Najimy
- Entertainment Orlando Baxter, comedian

Saturday, Dec. 5

10-11:15 a.m.

- Welcome EMAC Chair Sharmese Gunn
- Keynote Maria Milagros, speaker, author, storyteller and empowerment coach
- MTA Ethnic Minority Leadership Panel Aruna Krishnamurthy, MSCA, Fitchburg State University;
June Gustafson, Hingham Education Association;
David McGlothlin, Provincetown Association of Educators;
Regine White, Sudbury Paraprofessionals;
Candace Shivers, MCCC, Mt. Wachusett Community College

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

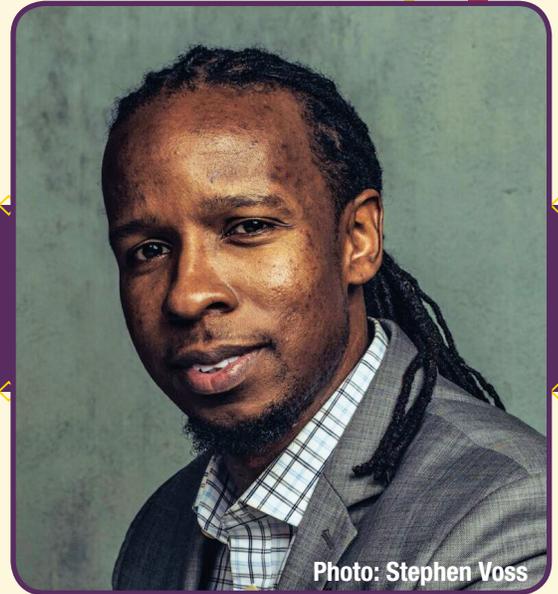
- Workshops..... (See Pages 8-9 for workshops and presenters)

Saturday, Dec. 12

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

- Workshops..... (See Pages 8-9 for workshops and presenters)

DR. IBRAM X. KENDI



Dr. Ibram X. Kendi is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University and the founding director of the BU Center for Antiracist Research. He is a contributing writer at *The Atlantic* and a *CBS News* racial justice contributor. Dr. Kendi is the 2020-2021 Frances B. Cashin Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.

He is the author of many books, including *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, which won the National Book Award for Nonfiction, making him the youngest ever winner of that award. He also authored three #1 *New York Times* best sellers: *How to Be an Antiracist*; *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*, co-authored with Jason Reynolds; and *Antiracist Baby*, illustrated by Ashley Lukashevsky.

His newest books are *Be Antiracist: A Journal for Awareness, Reflection, and Action*; and *Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America*, co-edited with Keisha Blain, which will be out in February. In 2020, *Time* magazine named Dr. Kendi one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

For more information on Dr. Kendi, please visit www.prhspeakers.com.

NEA PRESIDENT BECKY PRINGLE



NEA President Becky Pringle is a fierce social justice warrior, a defender of educator rights, an unrelenting advocate for all students and communities of color, and a valued and respected voice in the education arena.

A middle school science teacher with 31 years of classroom experience, Pringle is singularly focused on using her intellect, passion, and purpose to unite the members of the largest labor union with the entire nation, and using that collective power to fulfill the promise of public education.

Although she often describes herself as “just a Black girl from North Philly,” Pringle is a strategic, dedicated and tireless union leader who is — at her core — an educator who has been and continues to be motivated by what is best for students. Her passion for students and educators, combined with her firsthand classroom experience, equip her to lead the movement to reclaim public education as a common good.

Before assuming NEA’s top post in 2020, Pringle served as NEA vice president and before that as NEA secretary-treasurer. She directed NEA’s work to combat institutional racism and spotlight systemic patterns of racism and educational injustice that impact students.

MARIA MILAGROS (VAZQUEZ)

Maria Milagros (Vazquez) is a speaker, author, storyteller and empowerment life coach.

Whether sharing her life experiences and knowledge through impactful talks, workshops, leadership training, life coaching or videos, she uses stories to bring encouragement, education and love to empower others to get out of their way and break free from any hindering thoughts or beliefs so that they can live amazing lives and leave their unique and positive mark on the world.

She knows that no matter where you come from, what you've been through, or what you have done, love, connection and personal responsibility can change every area of your life. She knows because it has worked for her and she likes to remind others that she is not an exception to the rule. If she can do it, then you can, too!



ORLANDO BAXTER

Orlando Baxter exploded onto the Boston comedy scene in 2005 and was quickly established as one of the area's best young comics.

His fresh perspective and unique relatability soon made this former high school teacher a fan favorite and led to a string of finalist positions in a host of contests and festivals all over the world, including NBC's *Stand Up for Diversity*.

Baxter currently tours around the country, performing at clubs, colleges and festivals at home and overseas. In 2016, he made his late-night TV debut on the *Conan* show on TBS. Since then he's appeared on *Comedy Up Late* in Australia, B.E.T.'s *50 Central* and Laff Mobb's *Laff Track* on truTV.



MTA LEADERSHIP



Merrie Najimy, MTA President

MTA President Merrie Najimy is a fierce fighter for public education whose principles are grounded in her nearly three decades as a classroom teacher. Najimy was elected to a second term as MTA president in May of 2020. She is on leave from the Concord Public Schools, where she has been an elementary school teacher for more than two decades. She served as president of the Concord Teachers Association for 11 years and as a member of the MTA Board of Directors for six years before becoming MTA president. In her role as president, Najimy leads with an analysis of social, racial and economic justice at the core to win the schools and colleges our communities deserve. A graduate of Berkshire Community College and Framingham State University, Najimy has a deep appreciation for accessible public higher education. Najimy says her own childhood sensitized her to racial and social injustice. Growing up as an Arab-American student in Pittsfield, she felt alienated by the *Dick and Jane Reader*. “I did not see my family and my culture represented,” she says. “I became a teacher to bring a wider world view to all students.”



Max Page, MTA Vice President

MTA Vice President Max Page is a public education activist who has long worked to strengthen alliances that build strong communities. Page was elected to a second term as MTA vice president in May of 2020. He is on leave from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he has been a professor of architecture since 2001. He also has served as the director of the Master of Design in Historic Preservation Program. Page was president of the Massachusetts Society of Professors from 2006 to 2009. Reflecting his dedication to coalition work, he is a member of the Steering Committee of Raise Up Massachusetts, which was the driving force behind the enactment of legislation to provide a \$15 minimum wage and paid family and medical leave in the state. Page is also a founding member of the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts, which brings together students, faculty and staff to advocate for increased state funding and the affordability of our colleges and universities.

MTA EMAC CHAIR



Sharmese Gunn, EMAC Chair

Sharmese Gunn is an academic adviser for the Gateway to College Program and an adjunct faculty member at Mount Wachusett Community College. She is the creator of the nationally recognized Tea Time Speaker Series, chair of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Team at Mount Wachusett, and a TRiO alumna. In addition to serving as EMAC chair, Gunn is a member of the NAACP, vice president and an Executive Board member for The Three Pyramids/Minority Coalition in North Central Massachusetts, and a member of the Board of Directors for the Massachusetts Educational Opportunity Association. Gunn is a multiyear recipient of the Program Excellence Award for the Gateway to College Program, for surpassing all four benchmarks, and the 2018 recipient of the Community Service Leadership Award in North Central Massachusetts. Gunn is also a member of other committees and associations throughout the state and New England.



Saturday, Dec. 5, 10 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.

EMAC LEADERSHIP PANEL

Following the keynote address by Maria Milagros, the panel will discuss challenges and highlights for ethnic minority presidents and leaders within the MTA. Panelists are:



June Gustafson, Hingham Education Association

Gustafson is a sixth-grade social studies teacher in Hingham and has been president of the Hingham Education Association for four years. Born in Newton, Gustafson lived in Puerto Rico as a child. Her heritage includes Puerto Rican, Turkish and Cuban.



Aruna Krishnamurthy, MSCA-Fitchburg State University

Krishnamurthy is a professor of English and four-year chapter president at Fitchburg State University. “I have always been interested in ‘class’ issues,” which inform much of my scholarship and teaching interests,” Krishnamurthy said. “Leading the MSCA chapter has given me the opportunity to understand the challenges of turning theory into practice — and a valuable understanding of the idea of struggle and the power of solidarity.”



David McGlothlin, Provincetown Association of Educators

McGlothlin has been a social studies teacher for 31 years, in Massachusetts and in Virginia. Named the 2015 Massachusetts History Teacher of the Year, McGlothlin has taught grades 6-8 at Provincetown International Baccalaureate School for 15 years. He has served in leadership positions as local president in both states for 17 years, and he is currently in his sixth year as an MTA Board member.



Candace Shivers, MCCC-Mount Wachusett Community College

Shivers is an associate professor of sociology and human services. She has been involved in the union for 15 years, serving at the chapter, local, statewide and national levels. Shivers has been the MCCC chapter president at Mount Wachusett for seven years and she serves on the MCCC Board of Directors and Executive Committee. She is also a member of the MTA Board of Directors, serves on the Board Negotiations Team, and is a Massachusetts director on the National Education Association Board of Directors, where she serves on several committees and is secretary of the Black Caucus.



Regine White, Sudbury Education Association Paraprofessional

White has been an ABA tutor for the past year and a half, and she serves as the leader of the Sudbury Education Support Professionals. White has a master’s degree in behavior analysis. As an ESP leader, White says, “I have initiated a mentoring program, written a grant, attended several PD opportunities that I have shared with other ESPs, and so much more! I am excited to develop my leadership skills and make sure ESP voices are heard.”



All workshops will be from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops: December 5

400 Years Later: Taking Back the Indigenous Narrative

Presenter: Claudia Fox Tree, Lincoln Educators Association

In this workshop, participants will begin to unlearn, and then relearn, the First Nations (Native American) Indigenous story using a critical lens to transform, or decolonize, our thinking about teaching practices and curriculum content. Participants will explore strategies to confront invisibility and implicit bias. These strategies are relevant to all grade levels and subjects, and they are applicable beyond the Indigenous perspective.

Self-Care

Presenter: Sheila LeGrand, director of Apogee Human Services Consultants

Improper or insufficient self-care is among the many factors contributing to burnout and high attrition rates for educators. Research shows that effective self-care has the potential to mitigate the impact of stressors inherent in the education profession. As such, it is essential for educators to have a firm grasp of healthy self-care practices and to be able to differentiate them from other routines. Participants in this workshop will increase their understanding of the characteristics of healthy self-care and identify applicable interventions within various aspects of the job. In addition, they will self-assess and engage in dialogue regarding the observable impacts of inadequate self-care. Lastly, they will develop a brief self-care plan to enhance their occupational stress management.

Mapping Racism Under COVID-19

Presenters: Yahaira Rodriguez, Educational Association of Worcester; Joel Saxe, Massachusetts Society of Professors, UMass Amherst

In this popular education workshop, participants will name what we as educators are seeing, thinking and feeling at this time of systemic breakdown. We are dealing with multiple crises: a public health crisis, economic insecurity and government austerity, all in the midst of COVID-19 quarantining. Meanwhile, young people are rising up against police violence and systemic racism, and heightened racial animosity is fueled by President Trump's stoking of the flames of white supremacy. How does all of this impact our work and our individual well-being as educators, as well as the young people we teach, their families and communities? After a brief introduction and video clips, participants will share their perspectives on the impacts of these crises, especially in communities of color. The discussion will generate ideas for how we might address these issues, including consideration of how our union cohorts and organizations can play a part. This session is being led by members of MTA's Task Force on Race.

How to Become Involved and Stay Involved in Our Union

Presenter: Candace Shivers, Mt. Wachusett Community College, Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC)

This workshop will discuss a range of opportunities for MTA ethnic minority members to become more involved in leadership roles in our union. The opportunities discussed will include leadership positions at all levels, including in local unions and chapters, MTA statewide options and opportunities at the national level through the NEA. This workshop will also address leadership and self-care best practices so you can be a strong advocate for your members once you're in a leadership role. Candace Shivers has extensive leadership experience as a chapter president, local grievance chair and member of the MTA and NEA Board of Directors.



WORKSHOPS *CONTINUED*

Racial Justice Toolkit

Presenters: Rosa Lopez-Whitehill, Pembroke Teachers Association; Eric Bauer, MTA field representative; and Quesiyah Ali, MTA attorney

Dismantling structural racism involves understanding the structures that enforce it. This workshop examines three aspects of these structures: our laws, our unions and our social connections. Seemingly disparate threads often combine to keep people of color from holding power. Understanding these threads, reclaiming them, and then harnessing their potential can empower communities of color and advance racial justice.

Workshops: December 12

Complexities of Belongingness and the Role of a Center for Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

Presenter: Asher Hamilton, Cape Cod Community College

The threshold of belongingness is the examination of intersectionality and culture. Intersectionality and culture play pivotal roles in understanding the impact of oppression, privilege, power and domination (*Meyer & Land, 2003*). This session will explore the complexities of belongingness and how the development of a Center for Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging can provide a safe and supportive place to self-actualize while remaining connected to a larger world, one in which students of color and other students' collective struggles can be identified. The center will tie a link between self-discovery and resistance.

Building an Abolitionist Union

Presenter: Graciela Mohamedi, Brookline Educators Union

We often talk of systemic racism but often struggle to see our own part in it. This workshop will consist of two parts. The first part will allow us as union members to confront the historical background of race, radicalization and racism within ourselves, our union and our society. The second part will discuss steps that we as rank-and-file union members can take to build an abolitionist union.

Understanding and Addressing Race-Related Stress at Work

Presenters: Dr. Scott Fulmer, GRACE, UMass Lowell; Zena Link, Newton Education Association; and Khafayat Kadiri, UMass Lowell

MTA's Environmental Health and Safety Committee and the ALANA network have undertaken a research program to better understand the experiences of educators of color with race-related stress in the workplace. The purpose of this research is to better prepare our local unions to address this important issue within our school districts and colleges. Such efforts would support recruitment and retention of educators of color (EOC) and foster discussion and shared language within our workplaces that would ultimately reduce the level of race-related stress for EOCs. This workshop will share the findings of this research to date. Participants will also discuss the actions that they and their local unions can take to support EOCs by addressing race-related stress — strategies that range from collective bargaining possibilities to grievance strategies to leadership development. This collaborative work between the Statewide ALANA Initiative and the MTA Environmental Health and Safety Committee embraces the Kwanzaa principle of *Kujichagulia* (self-determination) and will strengthen EOC ownership of work environment issues.



Know Your EMAC Committee



Sharmese Gunn, Chair, MCCC

I am the senior resource specialist for the Gateway to College Program and an adjunct professor at Mount Wachusett Community College. I have worked for MWCC for more than 14 years. I serve as a diversity representative and I'm the creator of MWCC's Tea Time speaker series, a monthly discussion about diversity issues. I'm also an active member of and state delegate to the Massachusetts Community College Council and a member of the PTO/School Council for the Longsjo Middle School in Fitchburg.



Heba Abu, Cambridge

I work as a math teacher in the Cambridge Public Schools. I am an immigrant who came to the United States about 13 years ago. I hold a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and a master's degree in education, and I have worked in different school districts with diverse populations. Being an educator of color, I love to promote racial equity in my profession and in my daily practice — and to help all students feel successful and respected.



Joseph Fails, Worcester

I am a high school educator working for the Worcester Public Schools. I hold a B.S. in psychology from Clarion University in Pennsylvania, and I earned an Ed.S. in secondary education and a M.Ed. in administration at Worcester State University. I have worked in urban school settings for more than 20 years and have a passion for working with at-risk youth.



Claudia Fox Tree, Lincoln

I have been a middle school special education teacher for more than 30 years in Massachusetts and have taught professional development social justice courses at the college level for more than 25 years. I have a bachelor's degree in psychology and anthropology from UMass Boston and a master's degree in education from Northeastern University. My heritage is Arawak/Yurumein. I frequently lead conversations about "un-erasing" Native American First Nations People and about giving voice to Indigenous experiences past and present.



Joe Herosy, MTA Retired

I am now retired but worked as a music educator in Marshfield, with more than 20 years of experience. I am originally from Canton, but I have lived in Quincy for 25 years. My organizing work currently includes working on the Fund Our Future campaign as a volunteer for the MTA and as the South Shore Table Coordinator for the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance (MEJA).



Know Your EMAC Committee



Lisa Hua, Palmer

I am a middle school math teacher in the Palmer Public Schools and a member of the Palmer Teachers Association. I'm also a member of the Asian American Educator Mentorship Program, where current and aspiring Asian American/Pacific Islander educators work in mentorship groups to support one another personally and professionally. I am excited to be part EMAC, and I look forward to getting to know all of you and to give voice to all ethnic minority educators in Massachusetts.



Rosa Lopez-Whitehill, Pembroke

I am from Río Piedras, Puerto Rico. I immigrated to the U.S. when I was 15 and became an ELL student. I thrived in the ELL system and was able to graduate from high school in two years and go on to the Parsons School of Design in New York City. My first career was as an activewear designer. This is my eighth year of teaching Spanish. I currently teach seventh-graders at Pembroke Community Middle School.



Shauna Lee Manning, CSU, UMass Boston

I am a 30-year ESP employee at UMass Boston, where I am an administrative assistant. I have earned three degrees at UMass Boston (our best benefit!!). I was a union president for seven years and have continued service to the MTA and Classified Staff Union through committee work. I also have taught workshops for EMAC and MTA Summer Conference on Native American History and Current Issues. Inclusiveness and diversity are very important to me, and I am proud to represent EMAC and the MTA.



Janelle Quarles, CSU, UMass Boston

I am the At-Large Ethnic Minority Director on the MTA Board of Directors. I am an enrollment specialist for undergraduate admissions at UMass Boston and President of the Classified Staff Union. I am in my sixth year on EMAC, but I have been an EMAC conference attendee since becoming an MTA member over a decade ago! Warmest welcome to our event.

Merrie Najimy, MTA President, Ex-Officio

Max Page, MTA Vice President, Ex-Officio

For more information about the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, please contact Staff Consultant Kweku Nyinaku at knyinaku@massteacher.org or Staff Assistant Kay Coady at kcoady@massteacher.org.

www.massteacher.org/emac





Election Opportunities for MTA Ethnic Minority Members

Participate in the Governance of the MTA!

Our strength as a union is built on member engagement and union democracy. From the local to the state to the national level, we need members to speak, act and organize. Fighting for racial justice requires that we work to bring a diversity of voices into our union democracy.

Our union will be stronger when ethnic minority members participate in MTA and NEA election processes at the local, state and national levels.

Statewide and Regional Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly (NEA RA)
July 2 through July 6, 2021, in Denver, Colorado.

Deadline to self-nominate: 5 pm on Friday, January 8, 2021.

Regional Ethnic Minority Delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting
April 30 – May 1, 2021, at the Mass Mutual Center in Springfield.

Deadline to self-nominate: 5 pm on Friday, January 8, 2021.

- **Nomination forms for the above: [massteacher.org/nomform](https://www.massteacher.org/nomform).**
- **To run as a local delegate to either the NEA RA or Annual Meeting, speak with your local president and vice president in January.**

MTA Board of Directors

Various District Director seats on the MTA Board are up for election this year. Please refer to the MTA website or *MTA Today* for the list of districts holding elections in 2021. In addition, the At-Large Director to Represent Ethnic Minority Membership is up for election this year.

Nomination papers are due to MTA by 5 pm on Friday, March 5, 2021.

NEA Board of Directors

MTA members will elect two NEA Directors and three Alternate NEA Directors in 2021.

Nomination papers are due to MTA by 5 pm on Friday, January 8, 2021.

- **For the Board positions above, nomination papers may be requested from the MTA Division of Governance and Administration at MTAGovernance@massteacher.org or 617-878-8305.**

FULL DETAILS ON 2021 ELECTION OPPORTUNITIES CAN BE FOUND AT

www.massteacher.org/governance





MTA
Massachusetts Teachers Association

massteacher.org/emac