



BEST PRACTICES CLEARINGHOUSE

- Lessons from the Field -

Understanding Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting and How Educators Can Help

Wednesday, February 22, 2023 | 3:00 – 4:30 PM ET

SPEAKER BIOS

Elyse Robertson



Ms. Elyse Robertson serves in the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education. She focuses on school climate, school safety and health, well-rounded education, and youth and young adult drug prevention. Since 2016, she has worked on a variety of grant programs within the Department, including the Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program, the Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk Program, and the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program. Ms. Robertson began her career as an elementary school teacher in Florida and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer. She holds a Masters in Teacher Leadership with a focus in Global, Comparative and International Education, and a Bachelors in Exceptional Student Education from the University of Central Florida.

Ekwutosi Okoroh

Commander, United States Public Health Service, Team Lead, Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology Program, Division of Reproductive Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Dr. Ekwutosi Okoroh is a Commander (CDR) in the United States Public Health Service and the Team Lead for the Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology Program, in the Division of Reproductive Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She oversees the scientific work of Senior Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Epidemiologists, 12 of whom, are assigned to state health departments. Her team focuses on promoting and improving the health and well-being of women, children, and families by

building MCH epidemiology and workforce capacity at state, local, and tribal levels.

CDR Okoroh is also leading research on Female Genital Cutting and a learning community where states are working to improve their capacity and capability to use data to address racial equity among the MCH population.

Dr. Okoroh joined CDC in 2010 as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer in the Division of Blood Disorders in the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities where her work focused on addressing bleeding and thrombotic issues among women of reproductive age. She received her MD and MPH from Tufts University School of Medicine and completed her residency in OB/GYN at Phoenix Integrated Residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology in Phoenix, Arizona.

Susan Masling

Senior Trial Attorney, Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section, Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice



Susan Masling is a Senior Trial Attorney with the Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section (HRSP) within the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. She started with the Justice Department in 1990, in HRSP's predecessor office, the Office of Special Investigations, where she prosecuted World War II war criminals living in the United States. At HRSP her focus is on the prosecution of human rights violators, including those who commit Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). She is an active member of the U.S. interagency working group on FGM, was a 2015 Global Woman Peace Foundation awardee for her FGM advocacy work and was on the Steering Committee of the US END FGM/C Network from its inception until 2019. She graduated magna cum laude from Georgetown University Law Center in 1987.

Angela Peabody

Founder and Executive Director of Global Woman® P.E.A.C.E. Foundation (GWPF)



GWPF is a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to capturing the essence of women and girls who represent international culture and experiences and are sources of inspiration to their peers. Established on the principles of ending violence and injustices against women and girls, the mission of GWPF is to empower women and girls through education to help end gender-based violence, especially female genital mutilation (FGM). Angela is an embodiment of GWPF, having survived a violent coup d'état in Liberia, which resulted in a vicious military attack on her family's home where she and her family took refuge. Rebel soldiers of the opposing political party went on a 20-

minute shooting rampage on the home and debated on whether to assassinate her entire family.

Narrowly escaping the traumatic event with her family's lives, Angela fled to the United States where she quickly assimilated to American lifestyle as a mother of two young boys. After a celebrated career as a television journalist in Liberia and press secretary for the country's first female Minister of Agriculture, Angela found a niche in the transportation industry, and worked at the International Monetary Fund in a related capacity. Angela's job in transportation took her to countries all over the world where she learned and embraced cultures in many nations of most continents.

Angela is a highly sought-after public speaker on the issues of women empowerment and gender-based violence, most especially female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C). In 2006, she received an award in Print Journalism from the *Victor E. Ward Educational Foundation*. In 2014, Angela and Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation made history when they held the first Walk to End FGM in the U.S, which has become a popular international annual event in Washington, D.C. She and her organization were instrumental in getting legislation passed in Virginia to criminalize the practice of FGM as a class 2 Felony, in 2018. She also trains law enforcement in the Washington, D.C. Metro area, including Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Montgomery County, Arlington County, and agents of the FBI, to recognize and understand the practice of FGM from the cultural and traditional aspects. Angela trains school nurses and teachers on FGM and speaks to churches and women's groups to educate them on FGM. She and her organization meet with survivors of FGM the 3rd Saturday of every month in the only FGM specific support group workshop to help bring them psychological relief, following the heinous act they have survived.

In 2019 she and her organization returned to Richmond to help push a Bill through the Virginia Senate for FGM to be included in the Family Life Education curriculum in all Virginia Public Schools. On March 18, 2019, the Virginia Governor approved Bill 1159 for FGM to be taught in all Middle and Secondary Schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Angela is a published author, served as a preceptor to students of the Milken Institute for Public Health at George Washington University since 2018 and had been a speaker at a variety of conferences and meetings.

Karen McDonnell

Associate Professor in the Department of Prevention and Community Health at Milken Institute School of Public Health at the George Washington University



Dr. Karen A. McDonnell is a public health program evaluation and implementation specialist with over 20 years of experience working with community groups, public health agencies, and health care systems both locally and globally. Dr. McDonnell's expertise lies in using mixed methods to look at complex public health issues and programs. Her most recent work includes collaborations to develop and test a community-centered FGM/C prevention project, evaluating the National Domestic Violence Hotline/loveisrespect Helpline, taking a public health approach to gender-based violence, and evaluating multi-systems changes in the Clinical Translational Science Institute with Children's National and GWU. Dr. McDonnell has conducted trainings in public health policy, gender equity, and women's leadership and teaches coursework in Program Evaluation, Maternal and Child Health, and works with undergraduate and graduate students, medical residents, and community groups to further the exploration of methods to meet our current complex public health challenges. Dr. McDonnell is the recipient of the ASPPH Early Career in Public Health Teaching Award, ASPPH Academy of Distinguished Teachers, and the Milken Institute SPH Excellence in Teaching Award.

Katherine Finley

Associate Legal Advisor, Human Rights Violator Law Division, Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Department of Homeland Security



Kathryn Finley (Kate) is an Associate Legal Advisor with the Human Rights Violator Law Division (HRVLD) of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security ICE Office of the Principal Legal Advisor. Her portfolios include gender-based violence, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), human smuggling, and working closely with the Human Rights Violators and War Crimes Center to prevent and respond to the incidence of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) in the U.S. Prior to joining HRVLD, Kate was managing attorney at the Tahiri Justice Center, an NGO dedicated to serving immigrant survivors of gender-based violence. Kate has over a decade of experience practicing U.S. immigration law, specifically on human trafficking, gender-based violence, and asylum/refugee cases. Kate graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School, where she started the first immigration law school clinical program. Kate has lived, studied, and conducted research on human rights issues in Spain and Latin America. Kate received her B.A. and M.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she majored in Latin American Studies and specialized her research on Colombian asylum adjudications and Argentinian/Chilean human rights accountability measures. Kate speaks Spanish and French.