



Dear Friends in Faith, Advocacy, and Justice,

We at Transform Network bring you greetings in the universal language of love, wholeness, and healing. As co-creators and co-curators of this year's Children's Sabbaths Manual, we honor the cacophony of multi-faith communities that will be inspired by this trauma-informed and womanist work and who are committed to amplifying their voices for the sake of the children.

As you prepare to engage in this life-giving ministry of transforming the lives of children toward flourishing and thriving, in whatever your faith custom, we invite you to focus on your breath, ground yourselves, and offer up a greeting in this beloved community. You are not doing this alone. In the spirit of Ubuntu, a West African philosophy of interdependence that says *I am because we are*; we are in this together. There is no being without we-ing. We cannot do this work alone. The energy, strength, wisdom, and fortitude that we need to persevere and endure are found in partnerships and in community. Sometimes, the simplest way to forge a partnership is to begin by greeting a person in a way that respects their culture.

In the Hindu gesture of namaste, where you bring your palms together toward your face in an almost prayer-like fashion, you are making an offering or an invitation. In the Zulu custom, people in the villages greet each other with, "*sawubona*," which means *I/we see you*. The person receives this greeting and responds with, "*sikhona*," an acknowledgment that *We/I am seen*. At the heart of this is the understanding that we are part of a shared humanity.

As author and pastoral counselor [Pamela Ayo Yetunde](#) notes, the language in our greetings embodies and invokes a sense of interdependence and interconnectedness. She says this about the Zimbabwean greeting: "The traditional salutation in the Shona language is *Mhoro, wakaadii* ("Hello, how are you?") and *Ndapora kana wapora* ("I am well if you are well"). It is a salutation, which means, in essence, that their state of being was conditioned by my state of being."<sup>1</sup> Imagine if we took this posture with one another in our communities, with our neighbors, our children. To say that we are well only if the children are well is profound and perhaps the impetus for activating advocacy with and on their behalf.

In religious communities, there are customs and greetings that similarly acknowledge our interdependence on God. Whether it is the Baha'i faith of *Alláh-u-Abhá* (*God is the most glorious*) or the Jewish greeting of *Baruch Hashem* (*Blessed be G-d*), these greetings are a way of entering into community with one another for the work that is ahead. Greetings open a door to healing. Greetings begin the work of dismantling barriers and injustices. Greetings are a portal to bringing about change, reform, and restorative justice. Have you ever watched a child on the playground run up to another child and offer a greeting that is then followed by playing together and building community?

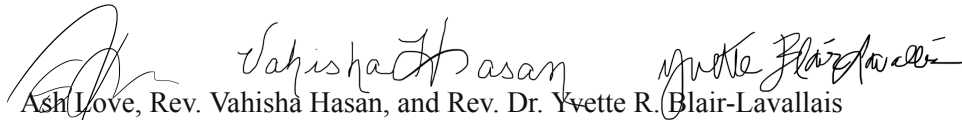
Children are the beacons and beneficiaries of our communities and villages. When our children are in need or hurting, they depend on us as former children to listen to them, stand in the gap and intercede for them, to be advocates for them, to administer wisdom and wellness to their wounds, to resource their needs, and to amplify our voices for their well-being. This is how you approach this work through a trauma-informed and womanist lens. So many children today are bullied and traumatized by policies, systems, and behaviors by people who don't see the value, dignity, and worth of children. It is troubling when children don't feel seen or heard, especially in our places of worship. Let us not be negligible in our

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<sup>1</sup> PAMELA AYO YETUNDE, REHENA HARILALL, NOBANTU MPOTULO, DAVID W. ROBINSON-MORRIS AND YAO OBIORA DIBIA. "Ubuntu: I Am Because We Are" in *Lion's Roar*, January 3, 2022.

responsibility to care for children in our communities. Let us remember our child-like selves and rise in wellness, together, with and for our children.

Peace, blessings, wellness, and love,

  
Ash Love, Rev. Vahisha Hasan, and Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais  
**Transform Network**

Since our founding in 2009, Transform Network extends the invitation to love God, love your neighbor, and take collective action. We activate these values by resourcing and training individuals and communities of faith to join God in transformative impact and social justice.

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