

Cape Cod International Women's Day Breakfast

April 7, 2026
7:30 am-10:30 am

Theme: Women Advancing equity, Democracy and sustainable change in the world.

7:30 Am registration

8-9 Am Breakfast buffet

8 Am Program begins

- I. Welcome / Invocation - Jeanne Morrison MC
- II. Music performance by **Natasha Walton (ASHA)**, *Weigh With Words*
- III. Speaking Program

Overview

Our overarching question and focus is “what does democracy look like in our everyday lives? Can we have a healthy democracy without equity among all groups of people? Given the national conversations about immigration, education, healthcare, DEI, the high cost of living, human rights and civil rights, etc., we are living in uncertain and fearful times. We are all impacted by the current administration’s policies and actions but as women we are particularly impacted in ways that increase already existing gaps. Amidst the political divisions and challenges to the democratic process, inequities persist and in some areas like healthcare, education, housing affordability and wealth, the gaps are growing wider.

The most pressing concerns for women are in areas where extreme inequities exist and we need to protect the human and civil rights for women and girls. Some of the areas of concern include health and wellbeing, social, economic and political empowerment. Equity is also necessary and achievable. Achieving social, political and economic equity would ensure women and girls are part of decision making, growth and wellbeing of our communities. Our discussion at the International Women’s Day breakfast will focus on some of the important challenges to achieving equity and how civic engagement is a pathway forward and something everyone can participate in, in some meaningful way.

- **Keynote speaker:** **Honorable Judge Shannon Frison, Attorney at Law**, leads off with a broad-based discussion about challenges women and girls face today and touch upon some of the most pressing issues of concerns, needs, and an urgent call to action. Throughout the event we will spotlight three themes: equity, democracy and sustainable change. Keynote will be followed by two panel discussions.
Judge Frison is the author of - Scar Tissue: A Tale of American Armor- memoir the life of Judge Shannon from the South Side of Chicago to the bench of the Massachusetts Superior Court, tracing the path of a Black lesbian Marine who moved through some of America's most rigid and exclusionary systems-military, legal, and cultural. Scar Tissue is about identity, authority, and navigating power as someone who was never supposed to have it. The stories she shares are scars: some visible, others buried. At times, they became armor. Over time, they became lessons. Frison had to decide how to carry what the world gave her. Her memoir walks through the moments that left a mark and the mindset that helped her keep going.

Q&A

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- **Health Equity Panel** - panelists will spotlight the theme of equity, through discussion of health equity looking through the lens of human/civil rights, and the intersections of various demographics, social, economic, immigration status, culture, etc. Panelists will prioritize needs and address the challenges and solutions, identifying the direction we need to go in various areas related to women's wellbeing, productivity and progress.
Moderator: Cecilia Phelan-Stiles, Director Of DEI And Interpreter Services Cape Cod Health Care

Panelists:

Leo Blandford, Director of Health Equity and Community Impact, Outer Cape Health Services

Raja Sinjab, LMHC, AT-R, PhD, Co-founder, Clinical Director & Board Member, Real Eyes Truth

Stephanie Wroten, RN, MSN, MS, LNC, became the Chief Executive Officer of [Duffy Health Center](#)

Q&A

- **Civic Engagement Panel** -panelists_ will address the themes of democracy and sustainable change by discussing why people must engage in their communities if they want to see the issues they care about addressed. Topics such as what is civic engagement and why it is important will be discussed. Panelists will share the work being done on the ground locally and what can be done now to protect and promote our democratic institutions like voting rights.

Moderator:

Celia Blue, CEO, President and Founding member Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition

Panelists:

Tracy Kelly- Wilson, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal member and Executive Director of Wampanoag Language Reclamation Project, Mashpee Select Board member

Lynne Plefner, President, League of Women Voters Cape Cod Area

Mari Keleshian, 16, is a native Armenian and a student at Sturgis Charter Public School in Hyannis. Featured in CCT Human Rights article, Mari says of youth, "Our voices matter right now. Not in the future. Not when we become adults. Right now,"

Inna Taylor - owner of Great Awakening Coffee House. Started a nonprofit -Changing The World - using our time and dollars to support. awareness event.

Q&A

IV. **Music by Natasha Walton (ASHA), , *Weigh With Words***