

# THE CAISO Quarterly



MAY 2024  
ISSUE #3

## HARD HEAD WITH A HEART OF GOLD

Ian Dhanoolal's Impact

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## BACK CHAT

Celebrating LGBTQI+  
Caribbean Voices

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## ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

The talent behind  
T&T's LGBTQI+ art scene

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## MAS HEALING

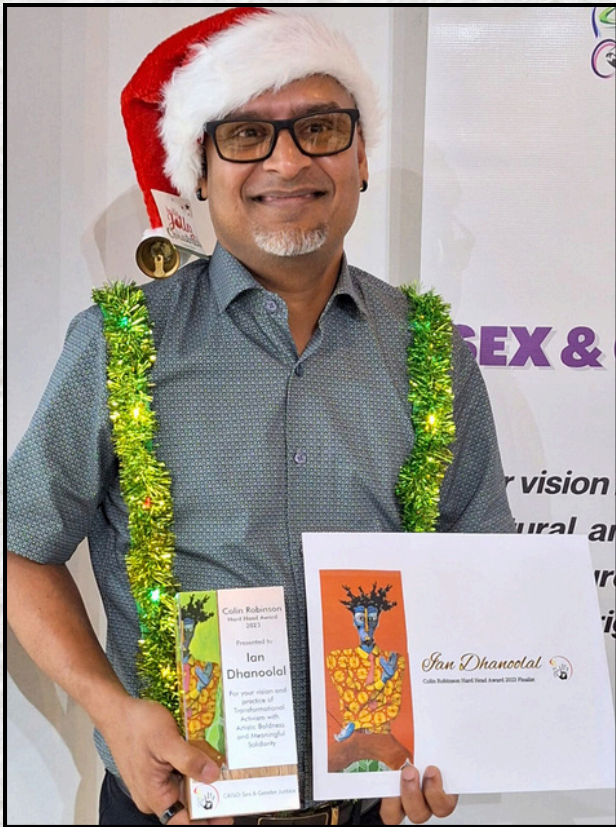
What art and imagination  
unlocks and restores



# A HARD HEAD



## with a heart of gold



Ian Dhanoolal, represents not just the deaf community, but his presence gives voice to the work of most marginalised groups.

Deaf leader, activist, researcher, interpreter & storyteller, Ian Dhanoolal, was adjudged winner of the 4th Annual Colin Robinson Hard Head Award, at a ceremony last evening at ThinkArtWork Studio, Port of Spain. **Dhanoolal, 49, is the founder of Trinidad and Tobago's first Deaf-led advocacy organisation, the Deaf Empowerment and Advancement Foundation (DEAF).**

Awarding Dhanoolal the Hard Head Award opens the much-needed conversation about disabilities and places **focus on the urgent need to put in place, the physical and imaginative infrastructure that shifts the term disability into an ability that is different but no less.**

Our annual end of the year event recognised five other finalists: Khaleem Ali (human rights and youth activist); Gillian Goddard (systems thinker, community organiser, chocolate maker); Conrad Mitchell (activist and human rights educator); Amílcar Sanatan (artist, academic, and activist); and Cyrus Sylvester (activist and community organiser). Sanatan and Sylvester were singled out for special mention by the Judges. Inspired by the fearless ways in which Colin Robinson – late co-founder of CAISO: Sex and Gender Justice - used creative imagination to speak out against injustice.

**CAISO's Hard Head Award supports individuals working towards equity and justice for all, whose work connects political advocacy, creativity, and coalition-building.**

Last year's call attracted 14 nominations across a broad range of human rights and social justice work, that included Comedy for Social Causes, Deaf Community Support, HIV/AIDS Advocacy, Mental Health Support, LGBTQ+ Rights, Rainforest Habitat Protection and Protest Mas.





# BACK CHAT



## Celebrating Caribbean LGBTQI+ Voices



We tried to choose just one word to describe Back Chat... but how do we fit the expansive joy, liberty, and camaraderie one feels in (possibly the only local event) that centres the voices, experiences, and stories of T&T's LGBTQI+ community?

This annual collaboration between NGC Bocas Lit Fest and CAISO: Sex and Gender Justice, which took place on April 25th at CB's Bar and Lounge, Port of Spain, was expertly curated by CAISO, TT Trans Coalition, and Novel Niche.

The event showcased the talents of a cadre of local writers and performers, who left their hearts, hopes, and hi-jinks on the stage. From Amir Denzel Hall to Angelique V Nixon, Brandon O'brian, Chinyere Brown, Daniel Robert Blaize, Deneka Thomas, earth, Miss Kalasi, Mizzz Understood, Phil Thee People Man, Raven, and Shivane Ramlochan – they all grabbed the mic AND snatched our edges with their energy and earnestness.

Grounded in the theme; we resist, we empower, we are fierce, Back Chat 2024 was a **genuine celebration of Caribbean LGBTQI+ voices**, and we are gasping for next year's edition of this inimitable experience that dignifies and humanises the lives of our LGBTQI+ community. If you supported CAISO's Community Food Bank or simply shared your time and energy, we are deeply grateful.

Lock in with CAISO and stay tuned for our next progressive, inclusive, and elevating LGBTQI+ event.



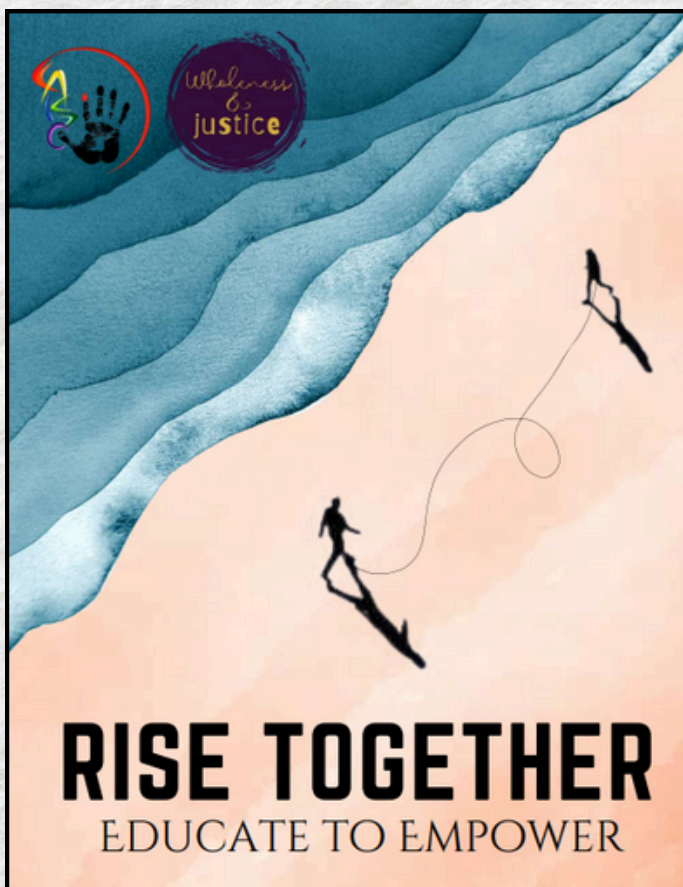


# EDUCATE TO EMPOWER: Resource Guides



Authors:  
Taylor Lutchman + Dominique Absalom

Research + Design  
Chinyere Brown

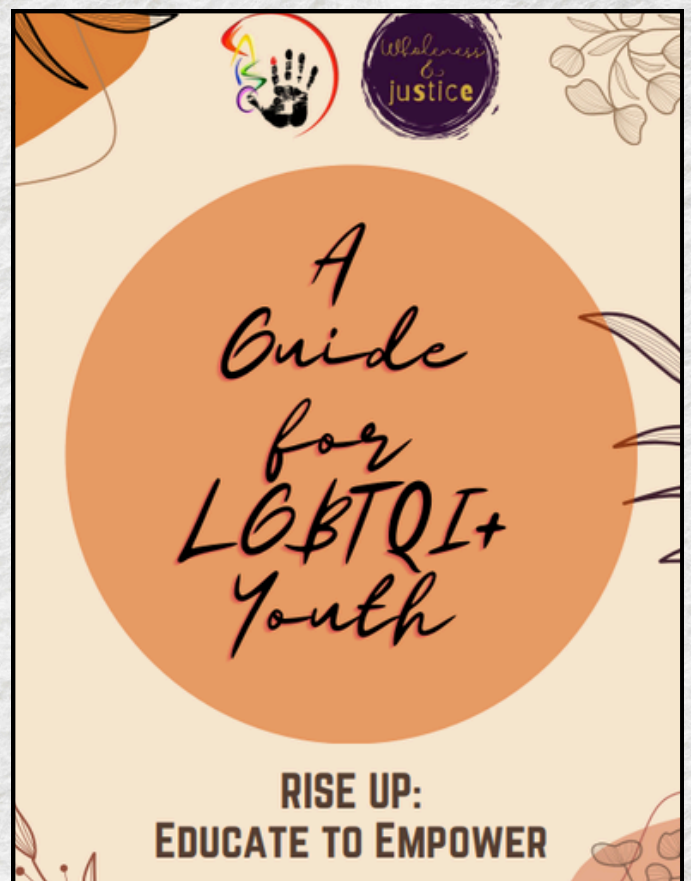


Written 'for us, by us' the E2E guides; **Rise Up** and **Rise Together**, are authored by LGBTQI+ youth and offer first-hand insights and advice on how to navigate the hills and valleys of homophobia in T&T.

Our guides aim to foster a culture of compassion, understanding, and inclusivity rooted in facts rather than fear or myth. Grounded in evidence-based research, studies of Caribbean gender and sexuality, and intersectional analysis, these guides build upon education and research materials produced by CAISO's Wholeness and Justice programme over the past two years.

**"You've got to tell the world how to treat you. If the world tells you how you are going to be treated, you are in trouble."**

The above quote, by the revered James Baldwin, truly speaks the heart of CAISO's recently launched Educate to Empower resource guides; that **understanding oneself, carving one's path, and creating boundaries are all key elements of empowerment**. Of course, while the courage to own and define one's life is hard won, these guides aim to reassure and enlighten queer and questioning youth that they are not alone.







# IWD 2024

Inspiring inclusion • Honouring all womxn



CAISO marched into IWD2024 with a roar of solidarity! As a feminist organisation, we never hesitate to celebrate women of all walks of life, embrace diversity, and honour the strength found in our intersections.

As always, when we say all women; we mean ALL WOMXN. Trans women, LBQ women, gender non-conforming women, migrant women, women with disabilities, women who are sex workers... all women, across ALL differences.

This year, we also hosted virtual panel discussion featuring key players in T&T's justice system, as we focused on a holistic approach to this year's theme 'investing in protection.'

The discussion, held on March 6, brought together the critical players like the TTPS Gender Based Violence Unit, Victim and Witness Support Unit, the Judiciary, and healthcare providers to discuss more integrated protection mechanisms that prioritise the wholeness of ALL women.





**IWD 2024  
RALLY & MARCH**

CAISO stood in solidarity with women worldwide and gathered for the International Women's Day Rally and March in Woodford Square, POS.





# TRANS DAY OF VISIBILITY



To us, the **International Day of Trans Visibility (TDOV)** is a perfect opportunity to appreciate the beauty, vibrance, and unmatched courage of our trans, non-binary, and gender-non-conforming community.

The very existence of the trans, enby, and GNC community prove our world is better beyond the binary. Because TDOV is more than words or a hashtag to us, CAISO hosted an honest and intimate discussion via Zoom on April 2nd with an exclusive Share Space on economic empowerment, wholeness and justice for T&T's trans community.

Presenters shared their insights and experiences as it pertained to entrepreneurship and empowerment, with the hope that the vibrance of trans people, togetherness and imagination will propel our individual and community goals closer to actualisation and success.



# LESBIAN VISIBILITY WEEK



**Lesbian Visibility Week** is a worthy reminder of the struggles #womenlovingwomen across the globe face daily. Whether it's dodging compulsory heterosexuality or side-eyeing TERFs, **fighting for the right to love who we love freely, safely, and legally is a hill we are willing to die on.**

One more time for the ones who care and those who couldn't care less; your life, your love, and how you choose to express it, is all yours! **We are #UnitedNotUniform!**



# WHOLENESS & JUSTICE

## outreach initiatives

### COMMUNITY CHALLENGES WITH PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH

Because wholeness and justice remain at the heart of what we do, CAISO held a meaningful Share Space in March on the **unique challenges faced by LGBTQI+ individuals when seeking mental health care services within Trinidad and Tobago's public health sector** and the way forward.

We explored the exciting possibilities for transforming mental health care access for LGBTQI+ folks in T&T, while also **troubleshooting innovative solutions and actionable steps to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for everyone.**



### QUEERING THE PRACTICE

Facilitated by CAISO's dedicated Community Therapist, Akilah Riley Richardson and Case Worker, Rae Alibey; this Wholeness & Justice Clinical Webinar held in March proved to be **an insightful exploration of the challenges faced by LGBTQI+ individuals within the public mental healthcare system in TT and how these gaps affect mental health treatment adherence.**

Participants had a great opportunity to deepen their understanding of the unique challenges faced by LGBTQI+ community and to explore practical strategies for fostering a more inclusive and supportive mental healthcare environment in TT.



# MAS HEALING



## what art + imagination reveal & restore

**Mas Healing** is space to engage creative energy and healing for ourselves and community through a series of creative healing workshops and artistic mas-making practices. The workshops facilitate healing practices through mas-making and skill-sharing around self-care and community care. Mas Healing is a co-created space developed and facilitated by CAISO team members Angelique Nixon and Shaden Alexander (who are both artists and healing justice practitioners).

The main goal of Mas Healing is to encourage self-advocacy and empowerment for LGBTQI+ community members. Participants use their own creativity as a tool for self-expression, processing emotions, grounding and balance, and recharging the spirit. Jouvay is our inspiration, our catalyst, our guide for the mas we create individually and together. In our first year of Mas Healing 2023, we made Jouvay Mas and took our mas on de road.

In our second year of Mas Healing, we held our workshops in April after Carnival but still used Jouvay as our inspiration. We focused on nature and climate justice as it intersects with gender and sexual justice. Our experiences of marginalisation and oppression reflect the ways the environment and nature have been exploited and abused. Our liberation is connected to all struggles for gender, sexual, racial, economic, and ecological justice.

We created masks and messages around healing for ourselves and the earth – using the elements of nature to activate and share what we want to represent through Jouvay (as a space of freedom, power, and creative self-expression).







# IDAHOBIT 2024

## INSIGHTS 2023 REPORT Launched!

## IDAHOBIT 2024 Media Conference



Access CAISO's 2023 Wholeness & Justice Insights Report, based on the third year of providing clinical, legal, and wholeness development services to Trinidad & Tobago's LGBTQI+ communities.

This report offers data and analysis, as well as policy recommendations, based on engagement with clients and community members who experience violations.

We invite you to read and engage with this report. Share widely and follow our work as we use this to support public education and policy advocacy to create social change for a just and equitable society for all.

The International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) is commemorated annually across the globe on May 17. This year's theme '**No one left behind – equality, freedom, and justice for all!**' resonates deeply with us, as it echoes CAISO's calls for change and evidence-based advocacy.

Review our annual IDAHOBIT media release and watch the entire media conference on our YouTube channel.



# ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



## Shalini Seereeram

IG: @artist.shalini

Email: shalini.art@gmail.com

Preferred Media:

Acrylic & Mixed Media

Caribbean artist, Shalini Seereeram, has enjoyed a career spanning nearly 30 years, glittered with numerous achievements.

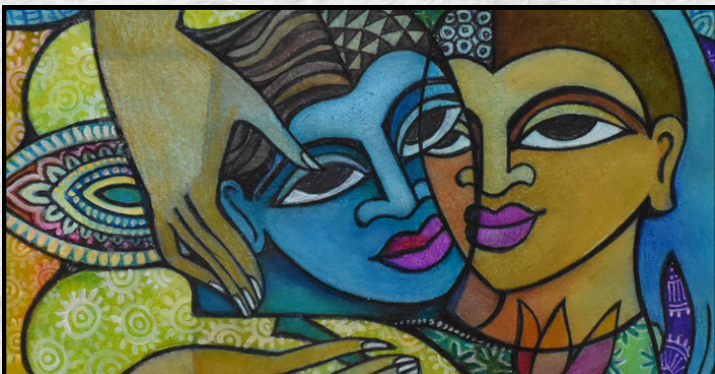
She turned her attention to painting and sculpture after her initial training in graphic design and having won the President's medal for her jewellery creations. Developing her unique style using unorthodox materials, Shalini's art is a favourite with local and international collectors. She is also highly sought after as an illustrator for magazine features and book covers.

Her artistic style is informed by continuous line, intricate patterns, dramatic contrast of colour and a sweeping visual narrative of geometric shapes. Her subject matter does not shy away from the intimacies of human relationships and their spiritual connection to the natural world.

Her work has been frequently exhibited in her native Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the United States, England, and Barbados.

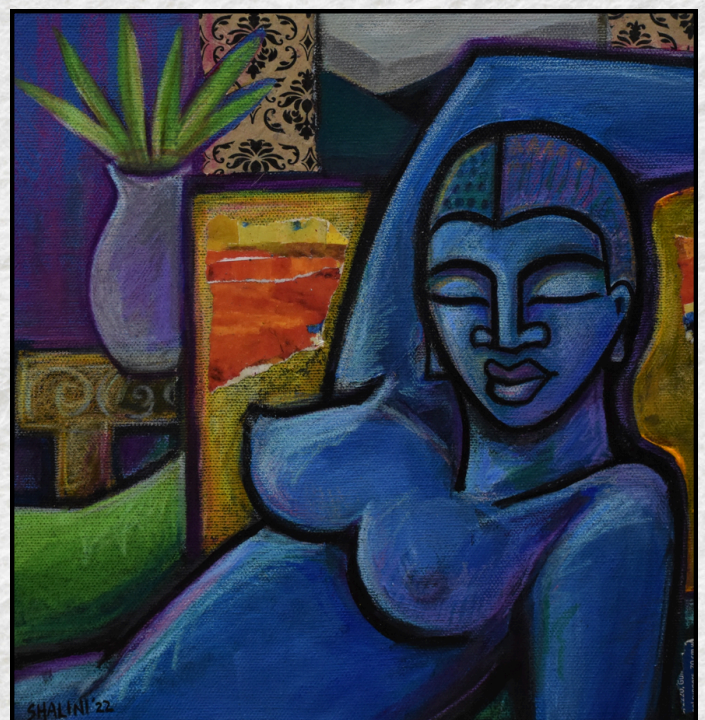
*"As a boldly female artist of Indian descent, I have faced incredible barriers but embraced every challenge. I have been grateful to represent my country with pride. I believe everyone goes through their personal journey in life. Drawing and painting are an essential part of mine and as a true artist these are like footprints left behind."*

### Your Touch ∨



∧ Passions Shelter

The Divine ∨





# Daniel Blaize

IG: @mrbubbieshouse

Email: daniel.r.blaize@gmail.com

Preferred Media:

Digital Art

Daniel is a multidisciplinary artist and storyteller, on the eternal mission to capture the essence of life, love and identity, and re-present it to the world.



## << Wreck 'Em Road Boy

"I wanted to encapsulate a unique sense of chaos often resulting from having to navigate this world as queer people, and how we move through it in spite of this."



## Who Vex Loss >>

"At a certain point on the road to liberation we have to let go of the idea that respectability grants us anything of true value or shields us from anything of true harm. Who vex loss."



# Chinyere Brown

IG: @nyere18

Email: [chinyere@caisott.org](mailto:chinyere@caisott.org)

Preferred Media:  
**Mixed Media**

Chinyere Brown is a mixed media artist who works with ink, beads, wax and digital mediums. Brown is of Trinidadian, Jamaican, and Guyanaese upbringing, and focuses her work on Caribbean narratives.

These narratives often place women and gender expansive peoples at the center. They believe in the transformative, educational, decolonial, and therapeutic power of art.

Follow them on IG @nyere18



Billie ^

∨ Blue Print



Particularisms in the Aggregate ^

∨ Softer







# MEET OUR TEAM



**DR ANGELIQUE V NIXON**, she/her  
**DIRECTOR**



**OMAR MOHAMMED**, he/him  
**DIRECTOR**



**CATHERINE SHEPHERD**, she/her  
**DIRECTOR**



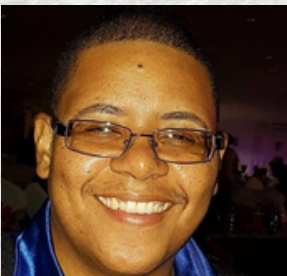
**ALESSANDRA HEREMAN**, she/her  
**DIRECTOR**



**ELRON ELAHIE**, he/him  
**ADVISOR**



**JOSH DRAYTON**, he/him  
**DIRECTOR**



**RAE ALIBEY**, she/her  
**COMMUNITY CASEWORKER**



**DONIELLE JONES**, she/her  
**COMMUNITY LAWYER**



**AKILAH RILEY-RICHARDSON**, she/her  
**COMMUNITY THERAPIST**



**PSYCHE GONZALES**, she/her  
**FINANCIAL MANAGER**



**JOHANNAH-RAE REYES**, she/her  
**PROJECT + COMMUNITY OUTREACH**



**KELLOG NKEMAKOLAM**, he/they  
**PROGRAMME + RESEARCH OFFICER**



**CHINYERE BROWN**, she/they  
**RESEARCH + PROGRAMME ASSOCIATE**



**JO JOHNSON**, she/her  
**CONTENT + SOCIAL MEDIA**



# SAY HELLO



to our phenomenal volunteers!



**NIKOLI ATTAI, he/him**  
QUEER ARCHIVES PROJECT



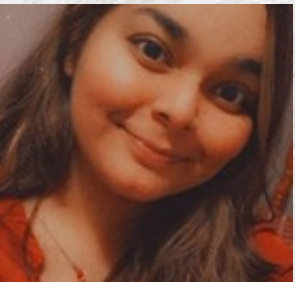
**DOMINIQUE ABSALOM, she/her**  
RESEARCH + PROJECTS



**TAYLOR LUTCHMAN, she/her**  
RESEARCH + PROJECTS



**FRANCISCA FERRET, she/they**  
RESEARCH + PROJECTS



**ANANDA RAMSINGH, she/her**  
RESEARCH + PROJECTS



**SHADEN ALEXANDER, they/them**  
EVENTS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH



**CHANDELLE O'NEIL, they/them**  
COMMUNITY BUILDING



**MAIAH COOPER, she/they**  
COMMUNITY BUILDING



## WANT TO SUPPORT?

- Become a **Resource Volunteer!**
- **Donate to CAISO** via our First Citizens Bank Account!
- Become a **Projects or Events Volunteer:** email us at [outreach@caisott.org](mailto:outreach@caisott.org) to learn more.

## WANT TO DONATE?

- Name: **CAISO: Sex and Gender Justice**
- Bank: **First Citizens Bank**
- Account No: **2415395**
- Account Type: **Chequing**

Please email us at [info@caisott.org](mailto:info@caisott.org) with your donation information and indicate whether the donation is for **Community Food Support, Client Emergency Support, or any other Operational Support.**

## WANT TO CONNECT?

- 🌐 [caisott.org](http://caisott.org)
- ✉️ [outreach@caisott.org](mailto:outreach@caisott.org) or [info@caisott.org](mailto:info@caisott.org)
- ☎️ 1-868-28-CAISO or 1-868-384-9557
- 📍 1 Robinson Ville, Belmont

## NEED SERVICES?

- ✉️ [wholenessandjustice@caisott.org](mailto:wholenessandjustice@caisott.org)
- ☎️ 1-868-28-CAISO or 1-868-384-9557

Reach us on your favourite social media platforms, follow [@caisott](https://www.instagram.com/caisott) today!

