

For immediate release: Thursday 2 September 2021

## [Can we talk about Power?](#)

A series of conversations exploring the power of power  
Mon 27 – Thu 30 Sep 2021, online

Have you ever thought about power – the power between you and your partner, your children, your colleagues? Have you thought about the impact of power on how you lead, on how you're managed? Have you thought about how power has affected your experience of the pandemic? And when you reflect on these questions, how powerful do you feel?

*Can we talk about Power?* is an online programme of events exploring the power of power. Developed as a collaboration between cultural thinker and researcher **Suzanne Alleyne**, the Barbican's public programming team, and **Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity** in Canada, the project is an invitation to join a series of five online conversations over four days this September.

Featuring an exciting group of poets, scientists, writers, artists and thinkers, the programme will encourage people to think about how power shapes their everyday interactions. It will explore what is happening in our brains and bodies when we acquire or lose power, and why that matters.

And while *Can we talk about Power?* takes the cultural and creative industries as the starting point, this is a conversation for everyone.

The programme includes:

- a session between **Suzanne Alleyne** and TS Eliot prize-winning poet **Roger Robinson** discussing why we need to talk about power
- an in conversation with neuroscientist **Lisa Feldman Barrett** about how our brains make sense of the world, and how this shapes our relationship with power
- a discussion with acclaimed Canadian writer **Margaret Atwood** about power and our lives
- an invitation to flip the lens on power and learn from an indigenous perspective. A conversation exploring how we think about power, body mind and spirit with **Howard Jang**, **Ry Moran** and **Dr Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux**, from the team and network at **Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity**, built on indigenous land in Alberta, Canada.
- Finally, it should be no surprise that power and wellbeing are bedfellows. Our last event is a chance to hear about the deep impacts of power on our wellbeing, with physician **Dr Joy Jones**, functional neurologist **Dr Jerome Lubbe** and neuroscientist **Dr Tim Rittman**.

Full programme details can be found below and, in addition to the events series, an experimental notebook has been commissioned and designed by graphic agency **Chill Create+**, featuring an interview between Suzanne Alleyne and leading neuroscientist **Professor Sukhvinder Obhi**.

*Can we talk about Power?* forms part of an ongoing research project by Suzanne Alleyne, titled *The Neurology of Power*. Started in 2018, this interdisciplinary practical science and lived experience piece of research aims to examine inequality and power in the context of culture, arts, and leadership. Alleyne is investigating where and how power resides in the brain, through the lens of neuroscience, social science, academic thinking and cultural practice. Based on a need to understand the ways in which the desire for power

underpins systemic injustice and racism, as well as the Covid pandemic sharpening the asymmetry with respect to access to resources within our society, this work has never felt timelier.

**Suzanne Alleyne** said: *'I think it's a basic human tenet to want to be heard and understood whether at home, with our friends, at work or in wider society. I believe that power permeates every conversation and relationship we have. I think it directly affects what space we have and how we can express ourselves. To know ourselves and to genuinely relate to others we have to understand our relationship to power at any given moment.'*

*'I am a Black British woman and this is the lens through which I approach my interdisciplinary research which tries to understand power through neuroscience and lived experience. What is the connection between power and empathy levels? What can the body's relationship with the brain tell us about patterns of acquiring power? How might models of sharing power be more beneficial to society than hoarding power?'*

*'The purpose of Can we talk about Power? is to hope that people start to think about power and how it impacts every second of their life and others. It is a space for reflection and for seeding new awareness and information. I am thrilled to be sharing these spaces of thought with a wide-ranging group of voices.'*

**Siddharth Khajuria, Senior Producer, Barbican**, said: *'This programme is the product of a dialogue with Suzanne and our collaborators at Banff which began in 2018. Throughout those conversations, so much has shifted in our lives – at home, at work, in the wider world. What's struck us as we've reflected on those shifts is that this conversation – about the power of power – has felt increasingly important. It's an invisible force that, as Suzanne's work shows us, shapes almost every relationship and interaction in our lives.'*

*'We're working to do something specific with the public programme here. Our approach is rooted in trying to convene conversations about social and cultural questions between unlikely communities of people from a range of sectors, disciplines and backgrounds. And one of the joys of working with Suzanne has been her ability to nurture and invite a group of artists, poets, writers, researchers and others to gather, alongside her, around this subject of power. I can't wait to hear the conversations they have.'*

There are two ways for audiences to join the online event: a talks only ticket with access to the live online programme (£10), and a talks + notebook ticket which includes a limited-edition experimental notebook mailed in the post (£15). There will also be a concession ticket of £5 for Young Barbican members. All tickets are available to book via the Barbican's [website](#).

## **EVENTS PROGRAMME**

Event timings are also shown in Mountain Daylight Time (MDT) for North American based and international audiences.

### **MONDAY 27 SEPTEMBER**

**Roger Robinson and Suzanne Alleyne in conversation**  
8pm – 9.15pm BST (1pm – 2.15pm MDT)

Two friends, TS Eliot prize-winning poet **Roger Robinson** and cultural thinker and researcher **Suzanne Alleyne** ask: *why do we need to talk about power?* Touching on themes of empathy, influence and race, this intimate conversation unpacks Alleyne's research into the subject, and establishes the threads of conversations the programme will explore over the next few days.

## **TUESDAY 28 SEPTEMBER**

### **Inside Out: Your brain and power**

4pm - 5.15pm BST (9am – 10.15am MDT)

Speakers: Suzanne Alleyne and Professor Lisa Feldman Barrett

If we want to think about power, then we have to think about how our brains make sense of the world. In this conversation with **Professor Lisa Feldman Barrett** -- among the top one percent most cited scientists in the world for her revolutionary research in psychology and neuroscience -- we navigate the links between our brain and the daily interactions which shape our lives.

### **Margaret Atwood and Suzanne Alleyne in conversation (pre-recorded)**

8pm - 8.45pm BST (1pm – 1.45pm MDT)

Writer **Margaret Atwood** joins Suzanne Alleyne to talk about power and our lives. Join us for this intimate and wide-ranging conversation with the acclaimed Canadian writer best known for her dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale*.

## **WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER**

### **Flipping the lens on power**

4pm - 5.30pm BST (9am – 10.30am MDT)

Chair: Suzanne Alleyne

Panel: Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, Howard Jang and Ry Moran

What can we learn about power from an indigenous perspective? And what might this show us about our daily lives, whether at home, work or play? Built on indigenous land in Alberta, Canada, the **Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity** facilitates creative spaces inclusive of indigenous knowledge and wisdom. From their team and network, **Dr Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux**, **Howard Jang** and **Ry Moran** join Suzanne Alleyne to talk truth and power.

## **THURSDAY 30 SEPTEMBER**

### **Let's talk about Wellbeing and Power**

4pm - 5.30pm BST (9am – 10.30am MDT)

Chair: Suzanne Alleyne

Panel: Dr Tim Rittman, Dr Joy Jones, and Dr Jerome Lubbe

The conversation about power comes down to who we are and what we, both individually and collectively, feel on a daily basis. In this session, Suzanne Alleyne presents a dialogue with physician **Dr Joy Jones**, functional neurologist **Dr Jerome Lubbe**, and neuroscientist **Dr Tim Rittman**, to explore the deep impact of power on our wellbeing at home, at work, and beyond.

**ENDS**

## **Notes to Editors**

### **Press Information**

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### **About the *Can we talk about Power?* curatorial team**

#### **Suzanne Alleyne**

Suzanne is a London based Cultural Thinker – a title she coined to describe her work as a strategist, researcher, and conversational artist. Using these mediums, she works at the intersection of academic research, business, art and culture. With her team, she explores, interrogates and studies the big questions currently facing contemporary society. Suzanne is an inaugural 2016 Arts Council England changemaker, and a visiting research associate and guest lecturer at King's College London a Brand Ambassador for Achatas Philanthropy and an RSA, DEMOS and 2020 Churchill Fellow.

#### **Barbican Public Programming**

The Barbican's public programme is a platform for experimental projects that ask social and cultural questions, spark conversations and bring people together. The programme comprises installations, research projects, residencies, architectural commissions and a range of events and talks. Committed to exploring new forms of cultural activity, the public programme creates space for perspectives from the arts and beyond. Our projects are rooted in collaborative practice and often borne from dialogues between unlikely communities of people from a range of sectors and disciplines gathering around a question of shared interest.

#### **Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity**

Founded in 1933, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity is a learning organization built upon an extraordinary legacy of excellence in artistic and creative development. What started as a single course in drama has grown to become the global organization leading in arts, culture, and creativity across dozens of disciplines. From our home in the stunning Canadian Rocky Mountains, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity aims to inspire everyone who attends our campus – artists, leaders, and thinkers – to unleash their creative potential.