

ANNUAL^{report} 2019





Office of Public Engagement
Ajeenah Amir,
Director

I'm so very proud and excited for you to read the 3rd Annual Report produced by the Philadelphia Commission for Women under the auspices of the Office of Engagement for Women. I certainly hope you find the report informative, inspiring, and meaningful to your life. The Office of Engagement for Women, along with the Commission, have led important conversations and initiatives around improving pay equity for women, supporting the unique needs of incarcerated and returning women, and speaking out loudly against pervasive toxic masculinity and abuses directed at women and girls. The Commission has also created space and community for women and girls in the city with their annual summit and engagement events throughout the years. As the Commission continues to advocate around the key issues you'll learn more about in this report, I'd encourage you to stay connected with them by sharing this report with the women and girls in your life and attending the Commission's public meetings and engagement events throughout the year.

The Commission, along with the other departments that comprise the Mayor's Office of Public Engagement, has an important role in bringing the voices of women and girls to public policy decisions. These voices contribute to a City government that is more equitable for all residents.

Since its creation, the Philadelphia Commission for Women's advocacy for gender equity has been on the front line of issues that matter to women in Philadelphia, and we owe the creation of this illustrious group to Councilmember At-Large Blondell Reynolds Brown. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Councilmember Reynolds Brown for her leadership, foresight, and tenacity in getting the Philadelphia Commission for Women established via voter referendum in 2015. We stand grounded in her belief that Philadelphia's women and girls deserve a voice in our government. I am grateful for all that she's done to build a strong foundation of advocacy, education, and engagement, as well as her undying support for the Commission's work. We send our best wishes to Councilmember Reynolds Brown as she embarks on a new journey.

Ajeenah Amir
Director
Mayor's Office of Public Engagement



Philadelphia Commission for Women
Felicia D. Harris,
Chair

Former First Lady Michelle Obama once said, “The difference between a broken community and a thriving one is the presence of women who are valued.” In Philadelphia, we are working to ensure—as a city—that we are thriving by not only supporting women and girls, but ensuring we have a voice. Our goal is to bring full equality for all women. This is a pivotal cornerstone of human decency, respect, and—at a minimum—a necessity to ensure a better future for our children and communities. But as we embrace equality, we also recognize that equity demands that we take a critical look at fairness and how race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, age, disability, and any number of identities and experiences impact how we live in the world and in our city.

We are proud of our advocacy on behalf of the city’s women and girls around the issues of pay equity, revising the City’s sexual harassment policy, Fair Workweek scheduling, maternal mortality, reproductive justice, menstrual equity for Philadelphia’s students, and dignity for domestic workers and incarcerated women. Our work over this past year has been transformational for the lives of thousands of women and girls across our great city. We ask that each of you stand with us as we continue our advocacy for gender justice.

Felicia D. Harris
Chair
Philadelphia Commission for Women

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Collective and Inclusive Solutions for Women and Girls



The Philadelphia Commission for Women and the Office of Engagement for Women have embraced the Collective Impact model to address issues that impact those who identify as women, families, and girls. We are committed to the concept, which was first introduced by John Kania and Mark Kramer in an article in the Stanford Social Innovation Review in 2011. Collective Impact requires a commitment by individuals and organizations, from both the public and private sectors, to work together on a common agenda for solving specific social problems. Collective Impact advocates recognize that no single program or organization can resolve large-scale social problems. Partners are committed to a structured form of collaboration that respects and empowers its members to affect policy decisions and outcomes.

According to the Stanford Social Innovation Review, there are five conditions that Collective Impact must meet:

1. A common agenda
2. Shared measurement
3. Mutually reinforcing activities
4. Continuous communication
5. Backbone support

During Fiscal Year 2019, we have partnered with key organizations to address violence against women and economic security for women. The Collective Impact model has also been instrumental in how the Office of Engagement for Women strategically uses the Participatory Stakeholder Public Engagement model to affect policy recommendations and outcomes. We employ human-centered public engagement that:

- Informs
- Consults
- Involves
- Collaborates
- Empowers

Collective Impact and Participatory Stakeholder Engagement are the underpinnings of how the Office of Engagement for Women and the Philadelphia Commission for Women approach our work. We have a mandate to promote civic, educational, and economic policies for women, and provide advice and recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on policies and programs that advance equal rights and opportunities for women in the city of Philadelphia.

“Collective Impact advocates recognize that no single program or organization can resolve large-scale social problems.”

We Get to Choose

An initiative of the Philadelphia Sexual Health Initiative (PASHI) of Philadelphia Health Management Corporation, We Get to Choose is a two-year pilot to develop multi-level interventions, designed using a trauma informed care approach to holistically address sexual risks among African American teens aged 15-19. The Office of Engagement for Women serves on the Community Advisory Board, along with representatives from nonprofits that provide youth services, public health care professionals, educators, and social workers. Priorities are to:

- Develop a sexual and reproductive health curriculum with a focus on delayed initiation.
- Identify healthy relationships and learn communication skills to help navigate healthy behavior.
- Provide instruction on developing life skills and goal setting.

Sexual Assault Review Team (SART)

Chaired by WOAR Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence, SART is a collaborative multidisciplinary team that provides a specialized, coordinated, immediate response to survivors of sexual assault. The Office of Engagement for Women works with team members that include law enforcement, sexual assault advocates and counselors, health professionals, and forensic medical personnel. The initial role of SART is to establish guidelines and protocols for best practices for victim notification and follow-up. The goal, especially as it pertains to cold case notification, is to minimize trauma surrounding sexual assault, have clear guidelines for communication, and provide follow-up resources for survivors.

Dignity for Domestic Workers



Domestic workers, the majority of whom are low-wage Black and immigrant women, have been systematically excluded from basic labor protections and are routinely subjected to sexual harassment, wage theft, and unfair working conditions. According to the Pennsylvania Domestic Workers Alliance, Philadelphia has over 16,000 domestic workers—84 percent of which are women with an annual salary of \$10,000. Legislation introduced by Councilmember Maria Quiñones-Sánchez and passed by City Council will ensure that domestic workers have fair working conditions that include:


- Minimum wage standards.
- Written contracts.
- Paid vacation time and sick leave.
- Breaks during the day.

The Philadelphia Commission for Women is part of a coalition that includes labor unions, social service agencies, and advocacy groups, joined by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), Women's Law Project, WOMEN'S WAY, and Women's Medical Fund. Commissioners attended a series of hearings and rallies, and hosted a Town Hall to engage the public on how a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights would improve the quality of life for Philadelphia's housekeepers and nannies.

Invisible Warriors: African American Women of World War II

To commemorate Black History Month, the Office of Engagement for Women co-sponsored the premier of the documentary film *Invisible Warriors: African American Women of World War II* with the Becky and Basil Educational Foundation. The film paid tribute to the 600,000 African American women who joined the workforce in service to our nation. These women were riveters, welders, typists, and machinists. They built ships and airplanes. They sewed the uniforms that clothed U.S. troops and the flags that were planted on foreign soil. These patriotic women, who President Franklin D. Roosevelt referred to as "our arsenal for democracy," paved the way for all women seeking to make a place for themselves in the workplace.

Fair Workweek Scheduling




**What Will a
Fair Work Week
Mean to You?**


Speakers
Councilwoman Helen Gym
Marianne Fray
Maternity Care Coalition
Vanessa Fields
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Philadelphia Commission for Women
Representatives from
Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT)
& Restaurant Opportunities Center United


**October 24, 2018
6:00pm - 8:00pm**

**The Enterprise Center
4548 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19139
Light Refreshments Provided**

**RSVP @
<https://bit.ly/2RCBJ31>**

 **PHILADELPHIA COMMISSION
FOR WOMEN**
Room 115, City Hall | (215) 686-2154

 **U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of the Assistant Secretary for
Public Transportation**

 **THE ENTERPRISE CENTER
BUSINESS • CAPITAL • COMMUNITY**

Philadelphia made history on December 6, 2018 by passing one of the most comprehensive and progressive employment standards for workers in retail, fast food, and hospitality. The new law, which goes into effect on April 1, 2020, will impact an estimated 130,000 workers. It requires employers of a certain size to provide more predictable work schedules, which means workers—many of them women heads of households—will have more predictable pay that they can count on. Predictable schedules also make it easier for women to make doctor and school appointments. The Commission received a City Council Citation, presented by Councilmember Helen Gym, for "tireless and fearless advocacy..." that recognizes that fair and consistent work schedules are a women's rights issue central to our collective fight for gender equity. The Philadelphia Commission for Women's advocacy on behalf of fair scheduling included commenting at public hearings and hosting two Town Hall forums to engage the public on how workers are impacted by unfair and arbitrary work schedules.

Dignity for Incarcerated Women



For the past year the Philadelphia Commission for Women has worked with a coalition of criminal justice reform organizations locally, state wide, and nationally. Our partners have included Ardella's House, Dignity Act Workgroup, New Voices for Reproductive Justice, #cut50, the People's Paper Co-op, the Philadelphia Reentry Coalition, and the Maternity Care Coalition. Following up on the article in our 2018 Annual Report entitled "Women's Bill of Rights: A Blueprint for Keeping Women Free," we have continued our advocacy for:

- Elimination of cash bail.
- Free access to menstrual hygiene supplies.
- Alternative and diversionary sentencing programs to keep families intact.
- Mentoring opportunities during and after incarceration.
- Housing and education resources.
- Access to mental health and substance abuse treatment.

On the Table Civic Engagement

On November 8, 2018, our office enthusiastically embraced the Philadelphia Foundation's citywide forum to elevate civic conversations. For breakfast we collaborated with the Mayor's Office of Black Male Engagement for a poignant conversation around gun violence. For lunch, we sat around the table and discussed issues of sexual harassment, toxic masculinity, and violence against women co-sponsored with WOAR Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence. For dinner, we broke bread with Ardella's House for a conversation with national #cut50 organizer Topeka Sams about dignity for incarcerated women.

Donations of menstrual supplies can continue to be delivered to the Office of Engagement for Women at City Hall Room 115, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Menstrual Equity Advocacy

NO MORE SECRETS
MIND BODY SPIRIT INC. *Register Now!!*

END PERIOD POVERTY CAMPAIGN

Everyone can participate: There will be opportunities to participate in person or virtually from your respective areas. Period Poverty is a nationwide dilemma and the Silence must come to an end!

START GETTING YOUR SIGNS READY TO SHOW SUPPORT AND BUILD AWARENESS. . . TO SAVE OUR YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES !

Friday
5.17.19
@ 4:30PM

RALLY & AWARENESS KICKOFF!!
Period or Not Respect the Dot !!

The Philadelphia Commission for Women has joined a global campaign calling for menstrual equity as a human rights issue. Locally, we have joined No More Secrets Mind Body Spirit to advocate for access to menstrual hygiene products in all Philadelphia public schools. Along with No More Secrets Mind Body Spirit, we rallied at the School District of Philadelphia to call attention to an issue that many people identify as a problem for women and girls in developing nations. However, lack of access to menstrual supplies also accounts for missed school days and health risks from inadequate substitutions here in the United States and in Philadelphia.

Our advocacy on behalf of incarcerated women has led to a change in policy that makes free menstrual supplies available for women who are incarcerated at Riverside Correctional Facility. Prior to our initiative, women had to pay for the supplies they needed.

Beginning in the summer of 2019, the Office of Engagement for Women has served as a drop -off site for menstrual supplies to be distributed to schools by No More Secrets Mind Body Spirit. Donations of menstrual supplies can continue to be delivered to the Office of Engagement for Women at City Hall Room 115, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

“Our Voices...Our Power” 3rd Annual Summit for Women and Girls



Over 100 girls and nearly 250 women attended the 3rd Annual Summit for Women and Girls on March 15, 2019 at LaSalle University to commemorate Women's History Month. With a roster of speakers that included Giselle Barreto Fetterman (wife of Lt. Governor John Fetterman), co-founder of Black Voters Matter Fund LaTosha Brown, and State Representative Elizabeth Fiedler, attendees selected morning and afternoon breakout sessions that included:

- Reality of Maternal Mortality.
- Your Phone is Not the Only Smart One.
- We Mean Business: Streamlining the City Certification Process for Women-Owned Businesses.
- A Brand Called You.
- Mind Over Matter: An Intimate Conversation with Feminista Jones and Carol Banguara.
- Never Too Young to Break Barriers.
- Womenomics: Your Money Makeover.

We were grateful to have the support of our presenting sponsor TD Bank for the third consecutive year. Other sponsors that made the summit possible included LaSalle University, New Century Trust, Independence Blue Cross, New Voices for Reproductive Justice, the Girl Scouts of Eastern PA, Philadelphia 76ers, the African Sisterhood, District 1199C of the National Union of Hospital and Healthcare Employees, Philadelphia Chapter of the National Organization for Women, and WOMEN'S WAY.

Suffrage. Race. Power: Changing the Narrative

4th Annual Summit For
Women and Girls
Presented by
TD Bank

SAVE the DATE
SUFFRAGE. RACE. POWER...
Changing the Narrative
Friday, March 27, 2020

Register Now
www.bit.ly/WomenandGirlsSummit2020

Philadelphia
Commission for Women

WOMEN'S WAY **CONNECTS**
WOMEN'S WAY **CONNECTS**

National Museum of
American Jewish History
5th & Market Street | Philadelphia

JOHNSON HOUSE
NEW CENTURY TRUST

The Office of Engagement for Women and the Commission have adopted a year-long campaign conceived by a national panel of Black women that invites a multi-racial engagement with all who embrace the transformative leadership of Black women, the alignment with women of color, and the partnership of progressive White women and others of good will who collectively uphold the power of gender equity in the quest for true democracy. The intent is to deepen the conversation about suffrage by facing past transgressions to build an inclusive future based on truth and reconciliation.

In partnership with WOMEN'S WAY, New Century Trust, Johnson Historical House, and the Office of Youth Engagement, the Philadelphia Commission for Women will use the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment as a launching pad for a series of salons and roundtables and our 4th Annual Summit for Women and Girls, scheduled for March 2020. It is also a continuation of our collaboration on the Changing the Narrative Workgroup of WOMEN'S WAY Women's Economic Security Initiative.

Women's Economic Security Initiative (WESI)

Chaired by WOMEN'S WAY, the Women's Economic Security Initiative (WESI) is a long-term, systems-level collaborative centered around a shared vision that all women in the Philadelphia region attain financial well-being for themselves and their families. WOMEN'S WAY and partners understand that poverty is a determinant of poor health outcomes, low educational attainment, unstable housing, and other adverse outcomes that are destructive to Philadelphia families and prevent our city from achieving true economic vitality.

WESI brings together government, nonprofits, philanthropy, business, and women with the lived experience of economic insecurity around a common agenda and aligned activities. The Collective Impact framework for WESI:

- Identifies and works to fill critical systemic gaps.
- Enhances the coordination and capacity of organizations doing promising work.
- Builds a community committed to data-driven learning.

The Office of Engagement for Women is a member of the WESI Changing the Narrative Workgroup. A priority of this group is to make recommendations using strength-based language to address the role of White privilege and patriarchy around issues of economic disparities, especially as they impact women of color and their families.

FY 2019 in Review

Hosted GrassROOTS Community Foundation's SuperGirls Leadership Camp tour of City Hall and meeting with Mayor Kenney.



JUL
18

Participated as Fun Safe Philly Summer Reading Program volunteers.

Co-hosted "Recalling Rape Culture: An Evening With Michele Dauber" with the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Organization for Women. Michele Dauber led the successful recall campaign of the judge that gave a lenient sentence to Stanford rapist Brock Turner.

OCT
18

Co-hosted "Women in the Workforce" Town Hall on Fair Workweek scheduling with the Women's Law Project, the Philadelphia Inquirer, Public Citizens for Children and Youth, WOMEN'S WAY, One Pennsylvania, and Community Legal Services.

Provided public testimony before City Council in support of Fair Workweek legislation.

NOV
18

Co-hosted three "Let's Talk: On the Table" civic engagement conversations.

Hosted Town Hall "Why are Black Mothers and Babies Dying and What Are We Going to Do About It?"

DEC
18

Personal Care Collection Drive to benefit the Hope Bag Mission distribution to survivors of human trafficking. Collected over 1,900 personal care items that were distributed to Dawn's Place, Salvation Army New Day Drop-in Center, Nationalities Services Center, Pathways Basic Center Program, and the School District of Philadelphia's T.E.E.N. Program to commemorate Human Trafficking Awareness Month."

JAN
19



Participated in the Philadelphia Women's March.

FEB
19

Co-hosted luncheon with the Basil and Becky Educational Fund featuring the premier of the film "Invisible Warriors: African American Women in World War II" in honor of Black History Month.

Hosted 3rd Annual Summit for Women and Girls at LaSalle University.



MAR
19

Co-hosted with the Mayor's Commission on African and Caribbean Immigrant Affairs and the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services "Multicultural Mental Health First Aid for Women."

Presented on the Role of the Office of Engagement for Women and the Philadelphia Commission for Women to the Philadelphia Ethical Society.

Hosted Town Hall on Domestic Workers Bill of Rights at 1199C Training and Upgrading Center.

APR
19

Hosted "Teen Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Healthy Decision Making" workshop for girls enrolled in the Ambitious Queens Uniquely Identified for Rising to be Educated (AQUIRE) at Furness High School and the Women of Tomorrow program at the Academy at Palumbo High School. The workshop was a follow up from the 3rd Annual Summit for Women and Girls.

A photograph of two Black women standing side-by-side. The woman on the left is wearing pink and purple patterned scrubs and has a stethoscope around her neck. The woman on the right is wearing purple and white Sesame Street-themed scrubs and glasses. Both are smiling. The background is a plain wall with a framed certificate visible in the upper right.

Maternal Mortality Disparities are Finally Getting Much Needed Attention

By Lexi White

Lexi White is a former Commissioner of the Philadelphia Commission for Women. She is the Senior Policy Manager for Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda in Washington, D.C.

Maternal Mortality Disparities are Finally Getting Much Needed Attention

The U.S. has the highest maternal death rate of all industrialized nations—an epidemic that harms all women, and especially Black women, and their families at alarming rates. Nationwide, Black mothers are more than three times as likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than their White counterparts, and more than twice as likely as women of other racial backgrounds.¹ In Pennsylvania, Black women make up 11 percent of the population, yet constitute 31 percent of all maternal deaths related to pregnancy. Similarly, in Philadelphia, Black women comprised three-quarters of all pregnancy-related deaths between 2010 and 2012².

The data we have about this health epidemic is not enough and also calls for more nuance and understanding.

Statistics alone do not tell the full story of this epidemic. For Black women, the reality of alarmingly high risks of maternal mortality is an epidemic that transcends socioeconomic status. It is a reality that points to structural barriers that are not caused by race itself, but rather result from structural health and care barriers rooted in many factors that stem from the core intersections of racism and gender-based oppression.

This year the Philadelphia Commission for Women has continued to raise awareness about the maternal health epidemic in our community, mobilize local and state stakeholders around this pressing issue, and recommend interventions and solutions to policymakers and other leaders. Our December 2018 townhall centering the topic of maternal mortality and the impact on Black women in Philadelphia saw the highest attendance of all our community town halls this year. The topic was also one of the most well attended of our breakout sessions at the 3rd Annual Summit for Women and Girls to commemorate Women's History Month.

Leaders in the reproductive health, justice, and rights movements—including community members, policymakers, health practitioners, and advocates here in Philadelphia and beyond— have reached consensus around a range of interventions to this issue. These include, but are not limited to, expanding programs that protect women's health over their lifetime and encouraging healthy pregnancy outcomes and linkages in prenatal and postpartum care and parenting support.

Some of the policy recommendations from our town hall on Maternal Mortality included:

- Requirement that doula services be reimbursed by insurers including Medicaid.
- Expansion of Medicaid coverage for women with substance use disorder for up to a year after their delivery.
- Supportive services for women with mental health issues.
- Allocation of \$41 million to expand Medicaid for one year postpartum (instead of the current six weeks).
- Additional allocation of \$1.5 million in the Philadelphia Department of Public Health's budget to address maternal mortality.
- Implicit bias training as part of the PA medical board's certification process.
- Prenatal and postpartum Community Action Teams to provide community-based health care services.
- Elevating the issue by putting it on the radar of the state-run PA Commission for Women.
- Independent assessment/audit of the Department of Public Health's implicit bias training.

KEY ACTIONS taken on this issue have included:

- Hosted public town hall with community members and stakeholders to further understand the problem and identify local and state-level opportunities to take action.
- Convened a community conversation and panel at the Commission's Annual Summit for Women and Girls featuring legislators, health practitioners, and community members to further shed light on problems and identify solutions.
- Advanced local legislation in collaboration with the office of City Councilmember Cindy Bass.
- Worked with local and state legislators to convene and testify at the Democratic Policy Committee in partnership with State Representative Morgan Cephas.
- Supported and elevated community-based health fairs and programs raising awareness about local community-based programs and resources intended to support positive maternal health outcomes.
- Conducted individual meetings with local issue stakeholders to gather information about programs and interventions that require more support and funding.

We are encouraged by the collaboration of the Philadelphia Health Federation, the Philadelphia Maternal Review Team, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Access Matters, the Family Practice and Counseling Network, Maternity Care Coalition, the National Nurse-Led Care Consortium, Prevention Point, and the Philadelphia Labor and Delivery Leadership Group (which represents Philadelphia's birthing hospitals) who will be able to add services as a result of a three year, \$1 million per year grant from the Merck for Mothers Safer Birth Cities initiative. This reflects an understanding that we are moving in the right direction through evidence-based interventions and innovative solutions.

We are hopeful that with these initiatives, in addition to a \$2 million grant from the CDC to establish a state wide Maternal Mortality Review Team and additional public hearings, Philadelphia will become a safer place for healthier birth outcomes.

¹<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pregnancy-mortality-surveillance-system.htm>

²<https://ldi.upenn.edu/eight-steps-preventing-pregnancy-related-mortality-philadelphia>

WE ARE NOT INVISIBLE:

Latina Girls, Mental Health, and Philadelphia Schools

National Women's Law Center Report Summary and Recommendations



By Noelia Rivera-Calderón

Noelia Rivera-Calderón is on the policy staff of the National Women's Law Center where she works on issues that impact LGBTQ students of color. For more information about the report and its recommendations, contact the author at nrivera-calderon@nwlc.org.

We are Not Invisible: Latina Girls, Mental Health, and Philadelphia Schools

Nationwide, Latina girls are struggling with feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and suicidal ideation at alarming rates. But in Philadelphia, the problem is even more severe. We found that more than half of Latina girls in Philadelphia are consistently sad or hopeless, compared with nearly half nationwide. In Philadelphia, more than one in seven Latina girls attempted suicide in 2017, compared with one in 10 nationwide. For lesbian, bisexual, and queer Latina girls, the picture is especially dire, with more than two in three in Philadelphia persistently sad or hopeless, and nearly two in five attempting suicide in 2017.

Latina girls' mental health is impacted by a variety of factors including: underinsurance; lack of culturally competent professionals; harassment and harmful gender expectations; a social context that encourages silence, stigma, and shame; stereotypes of Latinas as inherently "crazy," "moody," or "fiery" that lead to lack of identification for support; and the increasingly anti-Latinx political climate. In education, we recognize that whatever students experience in the world and their personal lives, they bring into the classroom. Students need schools that are conscious of their mental health needs, so they can succeed in their schools and in their lives.

Together with 13 Latina and Latinx students, the National Women's Law Center released "We Are Not Invisible: Latina Girls, Mental Health and Philadelphia Schools" in Philadelphia in April, 2019. The forum entitled "No Stigma, No Shame: Fighting For Latina Mental Health in Philadelphia Schools" was hosted by Taller Puertorriqueño. Our report not only highlighted the mental health needs of Latina/xs, but provided specific and actionable recommendations for schools and policymakers.

These student co-authors are leading voices on student mental health, and their work has been featured in Teen Vogue, The Philadelphia Inquirer, WHYY, and Telemundo, among other outlets. They have presented their recommendations at national conferences of educators, lawmakers, and advocates. We must lead the way by implementing their recommendations here in Philadelphia.

Individual schools, whether traditional public, charter, or private, should examine their school culture and actively take steps to make it more conscious and less stigmatizing of students' mental health needs. They can do so by:

- Creating mental health break spaces co-designed with behavioral health experts.
- Establishing evidence-based peer support circles as a regular part of the school day.
- Making sure their curriculum is inclusive of all students.
- Revising overly punitive discipline policies that place heightened scrutiny on Latina and Black girls.
- Promptly addressing bullying and harassment on the basis of sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), race, ethnicity, and national origin.
- Making sure their teachers are trained in trauma-informed and mental health conscious practices and students' disability rights.

District-level administrators SHOULD:

- Build space for students to provide feedback on how their school addresses mental health, such as on the annual school climate survey.
- Establish consistent training on student mental health needs and positive mental health culture for school leaders.
- Require schools to adopt culturally-affirming curriculum that enable Latinx students and other students of color to find affirmation, identity, and belonging in their histories.

Policymakers SHOULD:

- Support programs that create pipelines for Latinx and other people of color to enter into the teaching and youth mental health professions.
- Require school leader and educator training on trauma-informed and mental health conscious practices.
- Increase the number and cultural competency of social workers and other mental health professionals in schools.
- Require schools to inform students of their rights to disability accommodations and protections from harassment.

Like all students, Latinas deserve to learn in schools that support them. Creating supportive school environments is urgent, but attainable.





PATHWAY TO GENDER EQUITY: The Need to Dismantle White Privilege

By Diane Cornman-Levy

Diane Cornman-Levy is the Executive Director of WOMEN'S WAY. This article first appeared on WOMEN'S WAY's Blog on April 9, 2019.



For the past 30 years, I have dedicated my life to creating a more equitable and just society. Throughout this time, I have worked with some of the most marginalized populations in our country: homeless adults with severe mental illness, men coming out of prison, women fleeing domestic violence situations, and children living in deep poverty. Each of these populations became a “cause” in my pursuit of justice. I worked with highly skilled and educated women and men who were dedicated to improving the lives of others. Together we designed and implemented new programs that educated and empowered those impacted by poverty by improving their knowledge, building their skill sets, and strengthening their motivation. We forged partnerships, raised money, engaged thousands of volunteers. Our intentions were grand. Our efforts were strong. But our results were not what we expected or desired.

During these 30 years, our efforts did not lead to significant and long-term change. Many of the adults with mental illness remained on the streets because they were not able to access ongoing health care to manage their mental health problems. In spite of being highly motivated to start a new life, a majority of returning citizens recidivated because they were stuck in a system that routinely denied them access to stable housing and a job. Single mothers who worked two or three jobs continued to make decisions between feeding their children or buying them medicine for serious diseases such as diabetes and asthma due to a lack of health insurance. Many of these same women remained with abusive partners because their incomes did not allow them to be financially independent.

So what were we doing wrong? Why did our efforts contribute to so little change? Why did we ultimately fail at creating more equity?

Pathway to Gender Equity: The Need to Dismantle White Privilege

Today, I am the Executive Director of WOMEN'S WAY, an organization dedicated to the advancement of women and girls, and gender equity at large. For the past 42 years, WOMEN'S WAY has worked to promote gender equity through investing in organizations and leaders that address our four core pillars: reproductive health and justice, safety and gender-based violence, economic security, and leadership development. Some progress has been made with respect to advancing the rights of, and opportunities for women and girls, but we are currently in a time when reproductive freedom is threatened, sexual violence is still too often hidden, and equal pay for equal work remains an unfulfilled goal.

Since assuming this position, I have been diving deep into understanding what we mean by gender equity and how to achieve it. I focused my research on hearing voices that are too often silenced and engaged in honest and empathic conversations about the rift that exists between White women and women of color. I've read articles and books that talked about racism from the perspectives of White denial, White privilege, and White fragility. *So You Want To Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* by Robin J. DiAngelo, and *The Myth of Equality: Uncovering the Roots of Injustice and Privilege* by Ken Wytsma were especially influential in shifting my mindset. Through this process I learned a critical thing that has helped to explain my unanswered conundrums: "Why did our efforts contribute to so little change? Why are we not moving the needle to attain equity for all women?"

I learned that privilege and equity do not go together.

Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness.

Equity as defined above requires us to examine and dismantle the "barriers" that prevent the full participation of certain groups. In order to dismantle the barriers, we must understand the institutional, historical, and structural causes of inequities. Additionally, the different factors that equate to a person's multiple identities—relating not only to gender, but also to race, ability, age, education, sexuality, class, ethnicity, religion, and more—can impact one's experience of discrimination. These various identities and factors intersect and intertwine, which means gender equity cannot be achieved without all forms of equity. This is what Kimberle Crenshaw meant when she coined the term, "intersectionality," specifically regarding the experiences of Black women. And we can never achieve gender equity if we do not create more equitable systems and policies.

For example, if we want to eliminate the gender wealth gap that is 10 times greater for women of color than for White women, we must address the historically racist zoning laws that segregated towns and cities with sizeable populations of people of color after World War II. These exclusionary zoning practices evolved from city ordinances to redlining by the Federal Housing Administration that wouldn't back loans to Black people (or those who lived close to Black people) to more insidious techniques written into building codes. The result: women of color weren't allowed to raise their children and invest their money in neighborhoods with high home values. This inequitable practice denied many women of color the ability to build and transfer to their children one of the most common assets in our country—home ownership. This one law that is grounded in racism helped to start and sustain intergenerational poverty among families of color.

Historically, women of color have been left out of union jobs, which have been pathways for many White men and women to enter the middle class and sustain a livable wage for themselves and their families. In addition, the U.S. has traditionally excluded both women and people of color in collective workplace action, making women of color less likely to have a job where the workers hold

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any negotiating power. These are all practices and policies of a system that intentionally denies people of color, and especially women of color, equitable access to wealth-building assets.

If we are to achieve gender equity, we must dismantle all forms of oppression and supremacy. It is not enough to only dismantle male supremacy. We must also address racism and in order to address racism, we must address privilege, specifically White privilege. And to address White privilege, we must first understand White privilege.

Many people define White privilege by what it is not. It is not the suggestion that White people have never struggled. White privilege is not the assumption that everything a White person has accomplished is unearned; most White people who have reached a high level of success worked extremely hard to get there. Instead, White privilege should be viewed as a built-in advantage, separate from one's level of income or effort. Francis E. Kendall, author of *Diversity In the Classroom* and *Understanding White Privilege: Creating pathways to Authentic Relationships Across Race*, defines White privilege as "having greater access to power and resources than people of color (in the same situation) do."

White privilege is both structural and psychological—a subconscious advantage perpetuated by White people's lack of awareness that they hold this power. It is both on the surface and deeply embedded into American life. For example, in stores, the first aid kit has flesh-colored band-aids that only match the skin tone of White people. The products White people need for their hair is in the aisle labeled "hair care" rather than in the smaller, separate section of "ethnic hair products." These privileges are symbolic of what we call "the power of normal."

In Cory Collins' article, *What is White Privilege, Really?* he states that White privilege is also the "power of the benefit of the doubt." White people are more likely to be treated as individuals, rather than as representatives of (or exceptions to) a stereotyped racial identity. White people are less likely to be followed, interrogated, or searched by law enforcement because they look

"suspicious." White people's skin tone will not be a reason people hesitate to trust their credit or financial responsibility. In other words, they are more often humanized and granted the benefit of the doubt. The "power of normal" and the "power of the benefit of the doubt" are not just subconscious remnants of historical discrimination. They are purposeful results of racism, and they allow for the continuous re-creation of inequality.

Working through the lens of White privilege shapes our decisions on what is important, how to address social programs and what we should measure. In Sally Lederman's article, *Doing Evaluation Differently*, she explains, "White privilege and access to power influences the questions we choose to ask, the information we trust, which findings we decide are important or unimportant, and how we make meaning out of results." For example, evaluation tends to measure goals rather than the elimination of White privilege. Programs and services predominantly focus on promoting individual changes—change in knowledge, change in skills, and change in motivation. While these are important to empowering individuals to achieve a better life, they do not address the core structural causes of the gross inequities that women, and primarily women of color, are facing every day.

So where do we go from here?

As the executive director of an organization committed to the advancement of all women, I must live what I want to achieve—the equal and fair treatment of all women. This requires that I work harder and go deeper with examining and understanding my own privilege. Have I always had good mental health? Did I grow up middle class? Am I White? Am I non-disabled? Am I healthy? Am I straight? Am I a documented citizen in our country? Do I have stable housing? The answers to all of these questions, is yes. I must practice identifying the advantages I have that others may not.

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Once I gain a deeper understanding of my own privilege and how it impacts my thinking and approaches at work, home, and in different communities, then I must take active steps to dismantle it. In Ijeoma Oluo's book, *So You Want To Talk About Race*, she states, "when we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else's oppression, we'll find our opportunities to make real change."

At WOMEN'S WAY I am using my privilege to lead the Women's Economic Security Initiative, a systems-level collaborative effort to improve the economic security of all women and their families in the Philadelphia region. Central to our work is operationalizing equity—the process by which we embed equity into the daily practices of our collective work. This means including women with the lived experience of economic insecurity at the table as equals and co-creators of strategies and solutions for the issues that directly impact their economic well-being. This means redefining who the experts are in the room from people with White privilege to women with lived experience. This means taking more time to listen to those experts so I can learn more about the structural and racist barriers these women face every day to achieve economic well-being. This means continually examining my own biases and assumptions and how they influence the way I communicate with those in more vulnerable situations. This means scheduling meetings at times when working women can attend. This means providing honorariums for women with lived experience when they present at meetings and conferences. This means giving up some of my own power and making sure that power is equitably distributed and shared. This means dismantling my White privilege.

A Call to Action

The possibilities of where each of us can leverage our privilege to make real measurable change toward a better and more equitable world are endless. Join me in the fight to dismantle White privilege and create more equity in our homes, workplaces, and communities.

Educate

There are many great books and articles that will deepen your understanding of White privilege and how to dismantle it. Below are some articles and books that have been useful resources to me.

- Cory Collins' article, **What is White Privilege, Really?**
- Sally Lederman's article, **Doing Evaluation Differently**
- Ijeoma Oluo's book, **So You Want To Talk About Race?**
- Francis E. Kendall's book, **Diversity In the Classroom and Understanding White Privilege: Creating pathways to Authentic Relationships Across Race**
- Robin J. DiAngelo's book, **White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism**
- Ken Wytsma's book, **The Myth of Equality: Uncovering the Roots of Injustice and Privilege**

Speak Up

Use your voice to acknowledge and point out when White privilege is being used to advance the interests and needs of White individuals over the interests and needs of people of color. Ask candidates running for public office and those currently in public office how they will and how they are currently addressing the gross racial and gender disparities in our region and country. In your workplace, ask HR if their hiring, retention, and promotion practices are promoting equity. Share your visions for creating safe, healthy, and sustainable communities for all people.

A photograph of Dr. Monique Howard, a Black woman with short dreadlocks, speaking into a microphone at a wooden podium. She is wearing a black jacket over a blue top. The background is a bright blue wall with large white balloons. A purple and blue gradient banner is overlaid on the image, containing the title and author information. The WOAR logo is visible on the podium in the bottom right corner.

WOAR Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence Safer City Initiative to Combat Human Trafficking

By Monique Howard, PhD

Dr. Howard is the Executive Director of WOAR Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence (formerly Women Organized Against Rape).

WOAR

WOAR Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence Safer City Initiative to Combat Human Trafficking

WOAR Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence is Philadelphia's only rape crisis center and a central hub for services, education, and counseling for individuals impacted by sexual violence. Over the years, WOAR has implemented countless initiatives specifically targeted to the most vulnerable populations in the city. The release of the Philadelphia Commission for Women's report on human trafficking in 2018 reenergized WOAR's efforts to meet the needs of individuals at-risk to human trafficking in the city. Through the establishment of new initiatives and by working with individual clients, community groups, and agencies in the city, WOAR is working to address these organizational and systemic needs.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline estimates that there are hundreds of thousands of victims of human trafficking in the United States. In Philadelphia, these victims were categorized as children under the age of 18 forced into commercial sex, adults (anyone over the age of 18) forced into commercial sex, and children and/or adults forced to perform labor—all through force, fraud, or coercion. These populations were studied across three different U.S. cities with resoundingly consistent findings.

Analysis showed that opioid addiction, foster care, and peer-involved recruitment were three of the most significant factors used to target and victimize these populations. Nearly all participants suffer from co-occurring issues (e.g. substance abuse and mental health disorders). Children and youth who are disconnected from their family, including those in foster care, are at a greater risk for becoming victims. Overwhelmingly, research suggests that there is a scarcity of services specifically directed toward addressing trafficking victim's needs. After reading of the 2018 analysis, WOAR has identified realistic targets for actionable goals in the city of Philadelphia.

In 2018, WOAR took initiative to grow its staff and add services specifically for individuals who have been victimized by human trafficking. In November, WOAR welcomed a Human Trafficking Program Coordinator, who will work on designing programming that will raise awareness and change public perception to combat under-reporting. This programming will add to the extensive list of training and educational programs that are offered. WOAR has also welcomed a Peer Support Specialist, who will be joining clients in the community and conducting off site groups for survivors of human trafficking. Additionally, survivors of human trafficking will have another safe space in the city where they will be able to receive free trauma centered therapy.

WOAR is working with various systems in the community to be able to collaborate by providing survivors of human trafficking with services they seem to be missing. These organizations include the Salvation Army: New Day to Stop Human Trafficking Program and Dawn's Place. The human trafficking division of WOAR will continue to work alongside the other departments at WOAR to provide education, awareness, and support to those who have been victimized by human trafficking.

In major urban cities, such as Philadelphia, trafficking can occur in local motels and hotels. With such a vast interstate highway, Philadelphia can act as a hub for transporting victims. To get a better understanding of how trafficking manifests in the city of Philadelphia, the Safer City initiative was launched in April 2018 as a coordinated and comprehensive sexual violence and human trafficking prevention strategy that would be implemented citywide. Safer City—Philadelphia, focuses on awareness and training for those in hospitality, entertainment, and transportation industries, as well as college and university campuses. Safer City aims to systematically

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decrease the number of individuals who perpetrate sexual violence by increasing public and bystander awareness, engaging hospitality and transportation staff, and collaborating with universities, as well as community leaders and their organizations. A well-trained work-force is better equipped to identify sex trafficking when it is taking place and to show victims compassion and understanding. Communities that are well-educated in spotting potential signs of sex trafficking are more likely to assist a victim than to run from them.

WOAR's Safer City intends to lead the charge in ensuring that Philadelphia's hospitality, entertainment, and transportation industries are among the most skilled, equipping them with the tools to identify, report, and safely intervene when a

potential human trafficking situation or sexual violent situation occurs. It raises the level of awareness in these groups, while identifying at-risk populations and preventing sexual assault. Above all else, it aims to change public discourse about human trafficking and further educate members of our city.

Coupled with WOAR's Human Trafficking department, Safer City is yet another example of the organization's tireless effort to eliminate all forms of sexual violence.



Blondell Reynolds Brown

To the Women of Philadelphia

It is my privilege to present you with the 3rd Annual Report of the Philadelphia Commission for Women, which highlights key issues and experiences of the women in our city.

As I conclude my last term in City Council, I can truly say that one of my proudest accomplishments was the establishment of the Philadelphia Commission for Women in 2015. Since that time, my staff and I have worked closely and strategically with the Commission on

legislation that empowers women and girls (including the requirement of sexual harassment training for City employees), as well as issues that guarantee their right to a seat at the table—no matter their cultural, social, or socioeconomic background. Together, we have addressed important issues such as equal pay, raising the minimum wage, appointments on nonprofit and paid boards, and positions of leadership and responsibility in the C-Suite to name a few.

In the coming year, we will commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which prevented the government from denying access to the vote based on sex. While we have made tremendous strides in electoral politics—best illustrated by the record number of women voted into Congress during the 2018 elections—women are still fighting for equality in pay and other areas.

On the topic of equal pay: When I arrived in City Council in 2000 with my daughter, age 4, a woman made 76 cents to every dollar earned by her male counterpart. Today, 19 years later, women still earn only 3 cents more—or just 79 cents for every dollar a man makes. And keep in mind that the 79 cent rate is the average for ALL women, but Black, Latinx, and Native American women are making even less. According to last year's report, at the current pace, women won't achieve equal pay until the year 2058. My daughter Brielle, now 23, will be 61 years of age. Even worse, our Commonwealth of Pennsylvania won't achieve pay equity until 2068.

Every election cycle presents an opportunity for us to make a choice. Women make up 52 percent of our city's population—in fact, we are the majority. If you think about any specific policy or legislative decision that was achieved and positively changed your daily life, chances are that policy was conceived and led by a woman who understands the realities of walking in our shoes.

Michelle Obama said it best, "No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half of its citizens."

My decision to step off the center stage of the 2019 election cycle was the result of a self-assessment of who I am, where I am, and what time it is! I rendered a decision on my own terms. However, be well advised that THIS IS NOT A RETIREMENT. I simply want to grow professionally in other ways.

Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide."

I know there will never be a perfect time. However, this is the right time for me. At the end of the day, the myopic view of my life as viewed by others will not stand taller than the panoramic view I have for my future. Therefore, I will "Dare to Imagine" a new chapter written by me, Blondell Reynolds Brown.

The voices I hear and have chosen to follow belong to God and my own inner spirit. I decided not to allow the fear of the change stop me from making the change. I hear the "different drummer" of Henry David Thoreau's metaphor.

Further, I do not want to be one of those people who wished I had. The best inheritance I can leave my daughter Brielle is an example of how to live a full and meaningful life. I want Brielle to tell her children that not only did her mother stand for something while serving 20 years on Philadelphia City Council, I acted on it.

Quoting Diane Ackerman, "I do not want to get to the end of my life and find that I lived just the length of it. I want to have lived the width of it as well."

My mom would say, "While I do not know what tomorrow holds, I do know who holds tomorrow."

Lastly, without hesitation, I can say that I have worked with exceptional professionals across our government under multiple administrations. I deeply appreciate those lessons learned and the small difference we have made collectively. I look forward to reading about the continued, important, and valuable work of the Philadelphia Commission for Women. Embrace the challenge to make a tangible difference in the lives of all women in our city.

I urge you to look forward to a new beginning filled with optimism, hope, and the unlimited possibilities of service to others. In the words of my former Chief of Staff, Katherine Gilmore Richardson, "We journey on."

Remember my motto: Dream big, and when that does not work, dream bigger!

With appreciation,

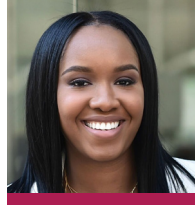


Blondell Reynolds-Brown

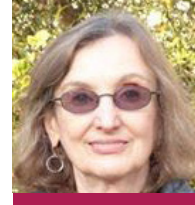
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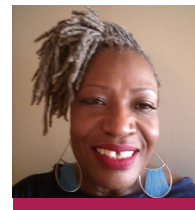
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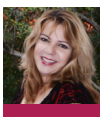
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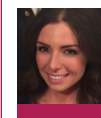
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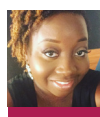
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