



## NO HATE IN OUR STATE HELLAM TOWNSHIP, YORK COUNTY, PA

"We must heal our communities and stand together against violence that grows from deep-rooted hate; society will not survive otherwise."

-Chad Dion Lassiter, PHRC Executive Director

### CONFRONTING RACISM IN A RACIALLY DIVERSE REGION

In this the third of three Town Hall discussions to take place across York Co. the PHRC along with Local Organizations and the Faith Based Community will facilitate a community discussion about healing after the senseless murder of Chad Merrill who stood up against the racist verbal attack of his African-American friend.



Free Event  
Social Justice  
Town Hall Series

When:  
Thursday  
January 31, 2019  
6:30-8:30pm

Where:  
Hellam Fire Company  
163 E. Market Street  
Hellam, PA 17406

Who We Are:  
The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission is the agency that enforces the laws that prohibit discrimination in the areas of employment, education, housing & commercial property and public accommodations.

CONTACT:  
RENEE MARTIN  
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR  
717.787.4410

renmartin@pa.gov  
www.phrc.pa.gov



## NO HATE IN OUR STATE YORK COUNTY, PA

"Hate has no place in a community. We will continue to foster appreciation in every diverse community."  
- Chad Dion Lassiter, PHRC Executive Director

### CONFRONTING RACISM IN A RACIALLY DIVERSE REGION

In this the first of three Town Hall discussions to take place across York County, the PHRC along with Local Organizations and the Faith Based Community will facilitate a community discussion about confronting racism.



Free Event  
Social Justice  
Town Hall Series

When:  
Wednesday  
September 26, 2018  
6:30-8:30pm

Where:  
The Crispus Attucks Center  
605 S. Duke Street  
York PA 17401

Who We Are:  
The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission is the agency that enforces the law that prohibits discrimination in the areas of employment, education, housing & commercial property and public accommodations.



## NO HATE IN OUR STATE WEST MANCHESTER, YORK COUNTY, PA

"We cannot continue to allow hate to consume our communities. We must work together to learn and grow in the spirit of love to defeat this epidemic of hate."  
-Chad Dion Lassiter, PHRC Executive Director

### CONFRONTING RACISM IN A RACIALLY DIVERSE REGION

In this the second of three Town Hall discussions to take place across York Co. the PHRC along with Local Organizations and the Faith Based Community will facilitate a community discussion about confronting racism. Our panel will include those affected by the recent divisive activity in York County.



Free Event  
Social Justice  
Town Hall Series

When:  
Thursday  
November 1, 2018  
6:30-8:30pm

Where:  
West Manchester Township Building  
380 E. Berlin Rd  
York, PA 17401

Who We Are:  
The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission is the agency that enforces the law that prohibits discrimination in the areas of employment, education, housing & commercial property and public accommodations.

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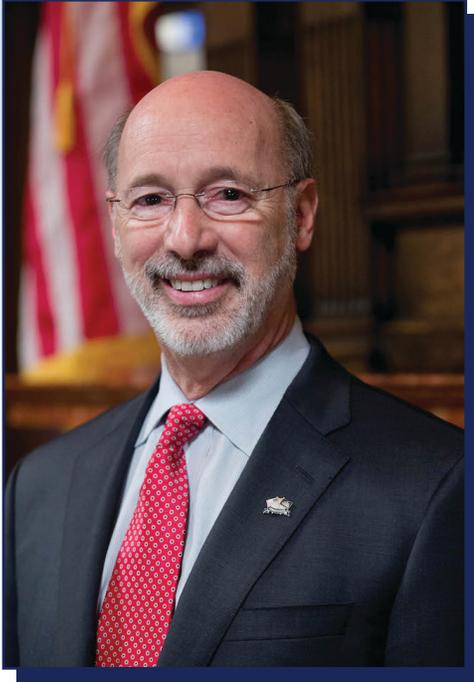


pennsylvania  
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

# NO HATE IN OUR STATE REPORT

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## A Message from Governor Tom Wolf

There is no place for hate or racism in our commonwealth. We must continue to have these conversations and work towards acceptance and tolerance for all of our citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Wolf". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Tom Wolf  
Governor





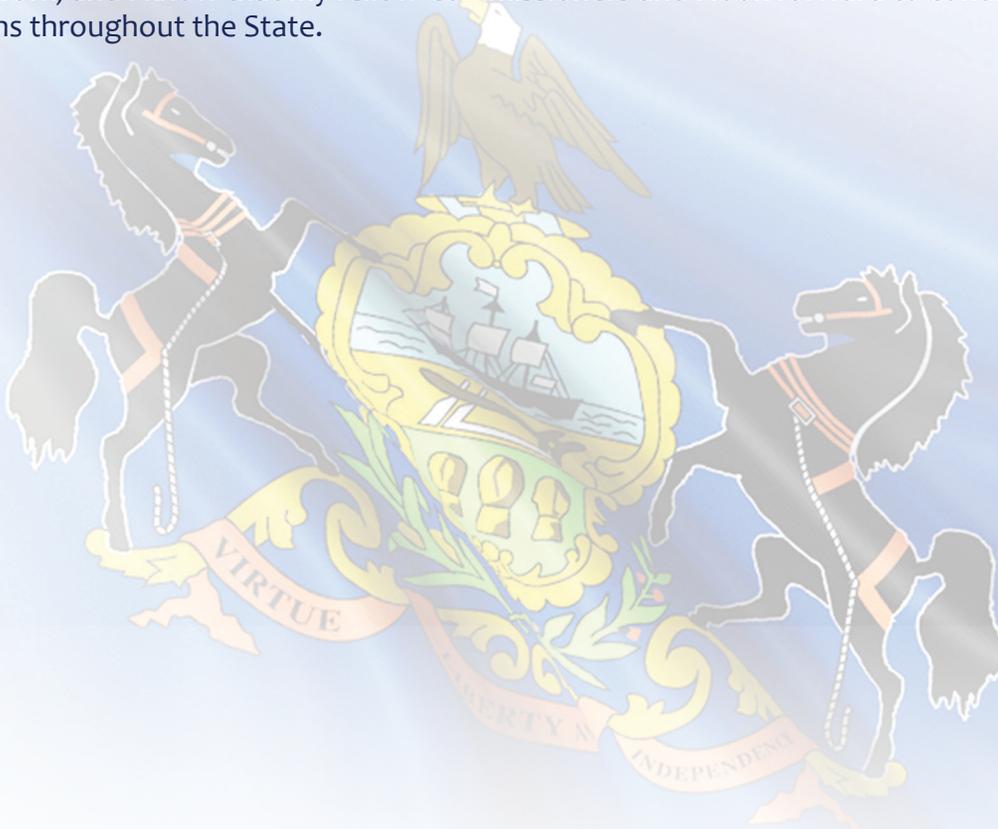
# Chairman's Statement

**M. Joel Bolstein, Esq**

**PHRC Commission Chairman**

I commend our Executive Director, Chad Dion Lassiter, and PHRC's professional staff for taking us to a place where we can affect change in our communities, and we are beginning to see that change. By compiling and releasing this report along with the next step suggestions, PHRC is listening, reporting and taking action. We recognize the importance of local communities taking ownership and responsibility for moving the healing and rebuilding efforts forward, and PHRC will continue to encourage and support those efforts. PHRC will also continue to engage those who live and work in Pennsylvania to promote No Hate in Our State Town Halls. We will stand with those who are actively addressing bias

and hate in their communities. As PHRC Chairperson, I'm proud of the work that the Commission has done in York, and I know that my fellow Commissioners and I look forward to continuing these conversations throughout the State.



# Executive Director's Statement

Chad Dion Lassiter, MSW

Executive Director



My education, life and professional experience dictates that having a conversation to break down walls is the first step in healing wounds that breed hate and feed division. Conversation alone or from one perspective moves us no closer to healing. Ideally, we need to communicate, educate and act. We each have an opinion based on our life experience, but without learning and understanding a different life experience we move backwards to a broken society. As Executive Director of PHRC I bring all my expertise and life experiences to this place in time.

I recognize that this work impacts society and I am committed to ensuring that the impact PHRC has will be positive. This report is the first of many to come. When we began this journey, we did not know what was to come. The York series of “No Hate in our State” was interesting and at times controversial but with data collected, new partnerships and a base for moving forward we are prepared to release these results with a suggestion of next steps. We hand this to the community to move it forward. We are not leaving York, but we know that healing must begin and be driven by the community that is traumatized.



# Commissioners



**Chairman M. Joel Bolstein**

“I am very grateful to Governor Wolf for appointing me Chairperson and allowing me to continue in a leadership role alongside my fellow Commissioners, our wonderful new Executive Director, Chad Dion Lassiter, and our very talented and extremely dedicated professional staff.”



**Vice-Chair & Commissioner Raquel O. Yiengst**

“My hope for PHRC is that it will continue to be the government agency that promotes civil rights, eradicates discrimination for all, and upholds Equal Educational Opportunity for all children so that we can create a better future for all.”



**Secretary & Commissioner Mayur Patel, Esq.**

“I am proud to be part of a group of individuals whose singular focus is to ensure that the people of our Commonwealth are being treated fairly and with respect. This area of focus is now more important than ever.”



**Commissioner Radheshyam M. Agrawal, M.D.**

“When rights of human beings are compromised, they lose the opportunity to a productive life.”



**Commissioner George B. Dawson**

“The road to justice should be free of impediments.”



**Commissioner Kathleen Dormer**

“Everyone deserves to live in a society free of discrimination.”

# Commissioners



**Commissioner Michael Hardiman**

“Every day presents new opportunities!”



**Commissioner Curtis Jones**

“From the White House to our house, human relations is an important aspect of the quality of our life. Fairness, in housing, employment and racial and religious tolerance is an essential responsibility of our organization.”



**Commissioner Gerald S. Robinson, Esq.**

“Even though our task is daunting we can meet it”



**Commissioner Adrian Shanker**

“The role PHRC plays is essential to the freedom to live, work, play, and visit Pennsylvania without fear of discrimination.”



**Commissioner Aleena Y. Sorathia, Esq.**

“There is no justice when some—because of race, sex, religion, color, national origin, or disability, among others—are denied a safe place to live, learn, work, and socialize. I am proud to serve on a Commission that strives to build a Commonwealth full of communities free of hate and discrimination.”

*“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”*

- Mother Theresa

## No Hate in Our State

In recent years, there has been a troubling rise in hate crimes across the nation. According to FBI statistics, the number of hate crimes increased by 17% crimes between 2016 and 2018, rising for the third consecutive year as heated racial rhetoric and actions have come to dominate the news. Of the 7,100 hate crimes reported last year, nearly three out of five were motivated by race and ethnicity, while religion and sexual orientation were the other two primary motivators.

Beyond these more blatant acts of racism, discrimination and bias continue to plague our nation. A recent NBC poll found that a vast majority of Americans believe racism remains a major problem in American society. Of those surveyed, almost half of all African-Americans said they have experienced workplace discrimination based on their race and four in 10 said they have been treated unfairly in a store or restaurant because of their race in the last month.

With the launch of a new social justice initiative called No Hate in Our State, PHRC is working with communities throughout the Commonwealth to take a stand against bias, discrimination and hate in Pennsylvania. The initiative, which aims to bridge divides and foster understanding, provides an open forum where residents, activists and others can come together to voice their concerns, learn about their rights, and begin a process of healing.

The social justice initiative was conceived by PHRC Executive Director Chad Dion Lassiter and coordinated by PHRC’s Education and Community

Outreach Division, which facilitates the Interagency Task Force on Civil Tension and the local advisory councils to the PHRC.



*Chad and PHRC Staff: Renee Martin, Tameka Hatcher and Jinada Rochelle*

### Background

No Hate in Our State was developed in response to a series of incidents involving racial harassment and violence that occurred in York County. These incidents included:

- A golf course in Dover Township asking five black women to leave for alleged “slow play.” When the women refused to leave, a former county commissioner called 911 twice to have them removed.
- KKK fliers placed on the cars of moviegoers in West Manchester Township attending a showing of *BlacKkKlansman*, a Spike Lee movie based on the true story of a black detective infiltrating the KKK. That same month, a black couple discovered a KKK flier in their driveway calling for racial segregation. Several other residents in Dover, West Manchester and Red Lion received similar fliers.

- A local principal wearing blackface at a school event.
- And most horrifying of all, the murder of Chad Merrill, a young white man, who was shot and killed outside of the Red Rose Restaurant and Lounge in Hellam Township after he defended a black friend against racial slurs. His death represented the first homicide in Hellam Township in 17 years.

Recognizing the need to address these incidents and provide residents an opportunity to express their pain, begin a process of healing and build coalitions to fight racism, PHRC planned a series of town hall meetings throughout the county.

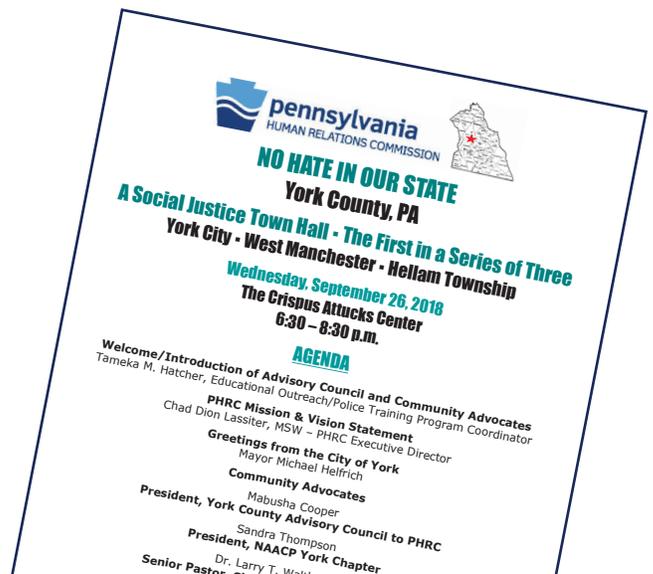
Lassiter’s vision for the town halls was to provide a safe space where advisory councils, local human relations commissions, stakeholders, community groups and residents could come together to speak back to forms of oppression and marginalization they were experiencing. The events also served to shed light on the prevalence of racism and discrimination in the area for those who may have been unaware of it. Each of the three town halls had specific goals.

### Town hall 1: The Crispus Attucks Center

The purpose of the first town hall was to threefold:

- To address the recent incidents of racial discrimination and hate;
- To provide participants an opportunity to talk about what they see occurring in their community; and

- To encourage participants to connect and build working relationships with like minded individuals.
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- To encourage participants to connect and build working relationships with like minded individuals.





*York Mayor Michael Helfrich*

The event, which featured remarks from York Mayor Michael Helfrich, included a panel of community advocates representing a variety of social justice organizations.

- Mabusha Cooper, President, York County Advisory Council to PHRC
- Sandra Thompson, President, NAACP York Chapter



*Louis Rivera*

- Dr. Larry T. Walthour II, Senior Pastor, Shiloh Baptist Church of York
- Rev. Yvette B. Davis, Director of Outreach and Organizational Development, POWER
- Louis Rivera, Latinos Unidos York



*Chad Dion Lassiter*

While the town hall was intended to provide a forum for sharing a diversity of perspectives, several in attendance were unnerved when a self-proclaimed member of the KKK rose to speak. When he began reading his white supremacist manifesto, some initially stood to oppose his rhetoric, but Lassiter gave him the floor and the crowd listened respectfully for the five minutes he spoke.

“We showed him there’s a place for him in the beloved community,” said Lassiter. “There is such a thing as restorative justice. Something there has gone astray, but we need to see his humanity--fragile as it is--and bring him back to himself and back to the community.”



*Man claiming to represent the KuKluxKlan*

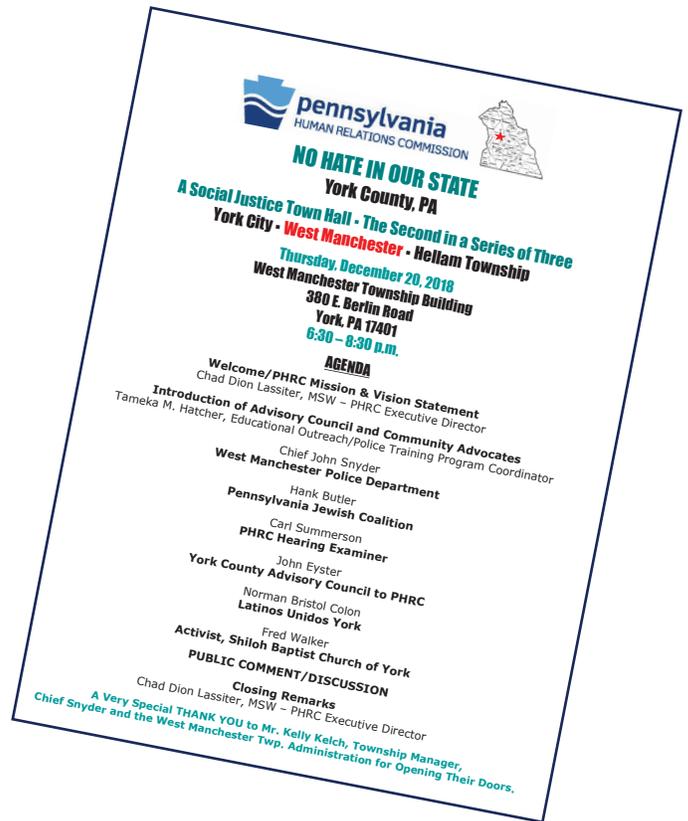
For John Eyster, a resident of York County, it was an eye-opening experience. “When he got up to speak, people were dumbfounded. It was embarrassing for me as a white male,” he said. “But I came to see the value in it. People need to know that gay is not alone. The fact is, there are many others out there who feel exactly like him.



*John Eyster*

Individuals of color know this because they are subjected to racism all the time. But until we are confronted by it face to face, people like me with white privilege can be oblivious to how pervasive these attitudes are.”

The thought-provoking nature of the event motivated Eyster to join the local PHRC and inspired both he and his wife to join the NAACP. “We are working to change people one at a time,” he says. “My son and daughter in law recently adopted two African American boys. Now, the effects of racism are close to home for me. I wish it didn’t take that to thrust me into reality, but now that I’m here, I’m not turning back. I’m going to keep working to make it better.”





Carl Summerson, PHRC Hearing Examiner

## Town Hall 2: West Manchester Township

A standing-room only crowd of over 150 people attended the second town hall, which aimed to educate participants about their rights and how to report racial discrimination and bias. During a panel discussion, members of the law enforcement community discussed how they are fighting racism in the county.

- Chief John Snyder, West Manchester Police Department
- Hank Butler, Pennsylvania Jewish Coalition
- Carl Summerson, PHRC Hearing Examiner
- John Eyster, York County Advisory Council to PHRC

- Norman Bristol Colon, Latinos Unidos York
- Fred Walker, Activist, Shiloh Baptist Church of York

The reach of racism in the community was underscored by Police Chief John Snyder, who related that he received phone calls and threats after he condemned the KKK fliers that were placed on moviegoers' cars and in the driveways of residents. As Tameka Hatcher, PHRC educational outreach and police training coordinator noted, "If you're not afraid to threaten the chief of police, what might you do to someone you see as less than you?"



Chief John Snyder

For Snyder the profound impact of racism in his community hit home when a black mother told him she was more worried about her son being pulled over by the police in communities such as West Manchester than she was about his safety in York City, where the crime rate is several times higher.

“I recognized this is a huge problem, he said. “As a Police department, we need to grow. It’s important for us to recognize our shortcomings.”

To address these shortcomings, Snyder and other York County police chiefs have been working with the Black Ministers’ Association to find solutions to unrest in the community. That work is still in the early stages and includes counsel from local pastors who teach police how to build trust through truthfulness and how to become comfortable by being uncomfortable.

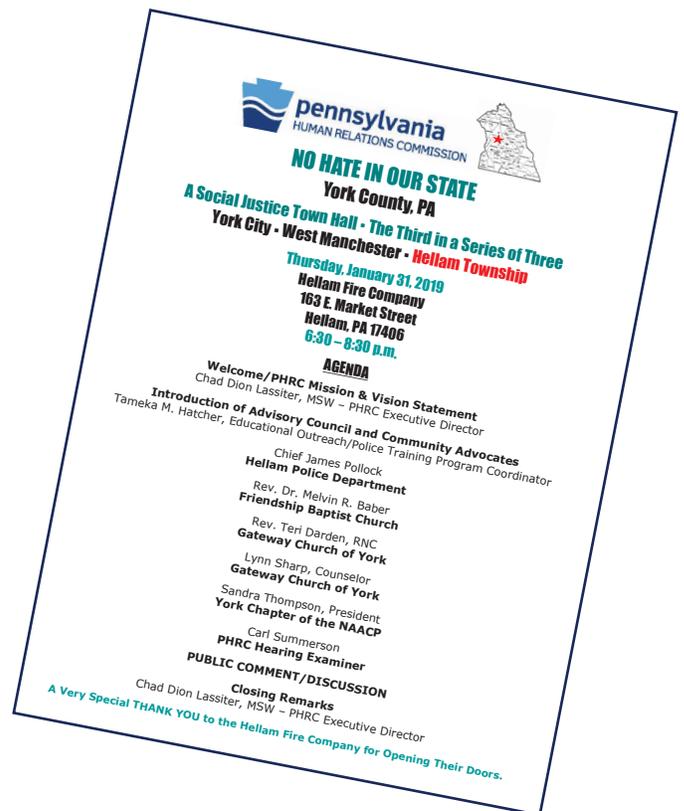
Another panelist, Hank Butler, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Jewish Coalition stressed that along with racial discrimination, overt acts of anti-

Semitism are also on the rise. He points to the horrific shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh along with the dissemination of anti-Semitic fliers, the desecration of Menorahs and the appearance of swastikas in public places.

Butler, who is working with other faith groups to strengthen hate crime legislation, says the town halls were a step in the right direction. “The town halls sparked discussion that needed to happen and brought to light the need for sensitivity. All of us need to be more cognizant of how what we say might impact others.

### Town hall 3: Hellam Township

The third town hall, which occurred in Hellam Township where Chad Merrill was murdered, was devoted to healing in the context of tragedy.



“We held this event near the bar where the murder happened,” explains Lassiter. At this poignant event, participants shared stories of overcoming trauma and dealing with cycles of grief, pain, faith and healing wounds. Members of the law enforcement community spoke about how the tragic event affected them.

- Chief James Pollock , Hellam Police Department
- Rev. Dr. Melvin R. Baber, Friendship Baptist Church
- Rev. Teri Darden, RNC, Gateway Church of York
- Lynn Sharp, Counselor, Gateway Church of York
- Sandra Thompson, President, York Chapter of the NAACP
- Carl Summerson, PHRC Hearing Examiner

But the most heart-wrenching moment of the event occurred when Pearl Wise, the Mother of Chad Merrill got up to speak. Sharing cherished memories of her son she told the crowd, that her son was someone who would do anything for a friend.

In recognition of her son’s heroics, Lassiter presented Wise with a plaque of appreciation. He stressed that stressed that the community shouldn’t be quick to get back to a sense of normalcy. “We can’t let complacency overtake us. We must remain vigilant,” he says.



*Pearl Wise and Chad Dion Lassiter*

Larry Walthour II, the Senior Pastor at Shiloh Baptist Church, agrees. Walthour who was a panelist at the first town hall also attended the final session. “The challenge now is the follow through,” he says. There are a lot of conversations in the community around racial equity. But we can’t have conversation without commitment. We must be committed to fighting racism in the boardroom, on the job, and in the community.”



*Pastor Larry T. Walthour II*

# Moving Forward

PHRC has already seen several positive outcomes as a result of the town halls. “We’ve received several emails, letters, and phone calls from people who are interested in learning about racism and how to combat it. We’ve also seen an increase in the number of people joining advisory councils,” says Lassiter. “The community is more aware that PHRC is a living breathing organism and that we will work to protect and empower them,” Lassiter also noted that PHRC has itself benefitted from the events. We’ve learned about other organizations that are doing this work and have developed new partnerships that will increase our effectiveness,” he says.

Since the initial meetings, PHRC has received several requests to replicate the program in other counties and has begun scheduling town halls throughout the state. But Lassiter stresses that the town halls are only one aspect of the PHRC’s a multi-pronged approach to addressing discrimination, bias and hate in our state. “We will continue to collaborate with partners such as the State Police, the Attorney General’s office, the NAACP, the Anti-Defamation League, Houses of faith, nonprofits and others to support a unified agenda to eradicate the shadow of hate,” he says.

Additionally, PHRC is working with the Anti-Defamation League to enhance the methodology for identifying hate groups in the state and is taking steps to ensure that incidents of discrimination, bias and hate are reported. To that end, it is working to recruit more people to serve on the 11 local advisory councils throughout the commonwealth, which serve as eyes and ears on the ground. PHRC will also continue to sponsor workshops, symposiums and lecture series aimed at increasing awareness around discrimination,

bias and hate, and educating individuals about their rights and the recourse they have if they experience discrimination.

## What Can You Do?

### Join a group working towards equity

- To join a PHRC advisory council contact - Reed Reynolds 717-783-7834 or [rereynolds@pa.gov](mailto:rereynolds@pa.gov)
- To join the Interagency Task Force contact - Tameka Hatcher 717-783-8486 or [thatcher@pa.gov](mailto:thatcher@pa.gov)
- Other groups include:
  - Local human relations commissions
  - The NAACP
  - PA Jewish Coalition
  - Community Responders Network
  - Anti Defamation League
  - YWCA
  - Latinos Unidos
  - The Center for Independent Living of Central PA

### Build white allies...

...Eliminating discrimination, bias and hate requires all people, including white people, to actively stand up to racism.

### File a complaint with PHRC...

...when faced with any type of discrimination or hate crime. To file a complaint go to: <https://www.phrc.pa.gov>

**Remember: *You are the change you want to see in the world.***

# NO HATE IN OUR STATE *Free Events!*



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"We must heal our communities and stand together against violence that grows from deep rooted hate, society will not survive otherwise."

-Chad Dion Lassiter, PHRC Executive Director

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Communications Director

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## Thank you to all who participated

We hope that you will keep talking and bring new and diverse voices to the table to move the conversation forward. PHRC and our Advisory Council are proud to have assisted in bringing so many together and we will continue to do so.

Listed here are those who participated or provided resources. We share this information as a resource for work moving forward.

Michael Helfrich, Mayor York City.....717-849-2221  
York Human Relations Commission.....717-846-2926  
Larry Walthour, Pastor Shiloh Baptist Church.....954-790-0403  
Rev. Dr. Melvin Baber, Friendship Baptist Church.....melvin.baber2@verizon.net  
Lynn Sharp, Gateway Church of York.....717-887-7525  
Jane Conover, Confronting Racism Group.....jconover@yccf.org  
Jean Treuthart, YWCA.....717-845-2631  
James Pollock, Chief Hellam PD.....717-252-3714  
Sandra Thompson, NAACP.....717-577-4436  
Crispus Attutucks Center  
    Robert Simpson.....717-848-3610  
West Manchester City Building  
    Kelly Kelch.....717-792-3505  
York Advisory Council to PHRC  
    Mabusha Cooper .....push718@gmail.com  
    John Eyester.....717-515-7646  
Hellam Fire Hall  
    Derek Dietz.....717-757-3333  
    Joyce Dusman.....717-755-3976  
Hank Butler, PA Jewish Coalition.....hank@pajewishcoalition.org  
John Snyder, Chief West Manchester PD.....717-792-9514  
Rev. Yvette B. Davis, Power Interfaith.....215-232-7697  
Sgt. William Slaton, PSP Equality and Inclusion Office...717-562-5808  
Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission  
    Central Office.....717-787-4410

***Thank you Ms Pearl Wise for sharing your son, Chad Merrill's story with us.***





**NOTES:**

# Thank You!

to our Communication Director Renee Martin and Outreach Coordinator Tameka Hatcher



Communication Director Renee Martin



Outreach Coordinator Tameka Hatcher

Very special recognition and thank you to our Racial Reductions Response Team members who shared their special skills and talents:

Ian Fahnstock  
Devin Hickman  
Deb Brice  
Jinada Rochelle  
Heather Roth  
Deven Price



# pennsylvania

## HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION



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