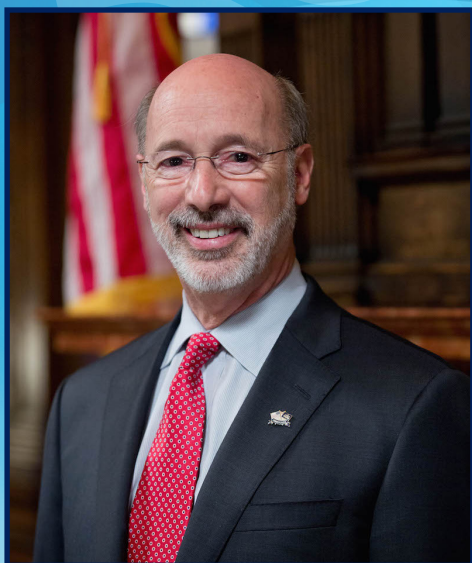




**PHRC  
C.R.O.W.N.  
CONFERENCE  
PROGRAM**

**October 27, 2022**



The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania stands firm on our bedrock belief that all job applicants should have equitable treatment. This means being treated equitably without regard to race, color, religion, sex, disability status, gender, or sexual orientation.

As proposed, the state's C.R.O.W.N. Act bill would add another dimension to this quest for fair treatment. The C.R.O.W.N. Act, which stands for Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair, would prohibit discrimination based on a person's hair color or style. I applaud the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission for hosting this conference and helping the state move toward a future of work that is free of discriminatory practices.

*Tom Wolf*





Several years ago, a young athlete was given a choice -- cut his dreadlocks or forfeit a wrestling match. The video of the incident showing his dreadlocks being cut off went viral, but unfortunately it was neither the first nor last time an African American faced discrimination because of their choice of hair style. A hairstyle is an expression of individuality and personal preference, and it should not be a basis for determining eligibility for school activities or employment. It is the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission's mission to promote equal opportunity for all and enforce Pennsylvania's civil rights laws that protect people from unlawful discrimination, which is why we fully support the C.R.O.W.N. Act and are proud to host this conference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. G. Williams". The signature is stylized and fluid.





Depending upon your outlook hairstyles associated with African Americans are either beautiful adornment or not. However, what a person thinks of locks, braids, twists, bantu knots, afros and other natural hair styles should never be the basis of an employment decision because it then crosses the line from personal opinion to active discrimination.

Because natural hair styles have been considered unprofessional, people of color have lost jobs and been dismissed from schools. Hair discrimination has been particularly hard on African American women. Consider that 80 percent of Black women are more likely to change their natural hair to better fit in at work and they are 3.4 times more likely to have others perceive of their hair as unprofessional. Black women are more likely to be sent home or know someone who has been sent home because of his or her hairstyle. In addition, fifty percent of Black children have experienced hair discrimination.

These issues around natural hair is why we have organized this conference with the hope of bringing a deeper understanding into the serious issue of hair discrimination. Over 30 years ago, Paulette Caldwell wrote in the Duke Law Journal, “Mostly, I marveled with sadness that something as simple as a black woman’s hair continues to threaten the social, political, and economic fabric of American life.”

Cheryl Dion Webster, MSW





**Adjoa B. Asamoah**  
**Keynote Speaker**

Adjoa B. Asamoah is a lifelong racial equity champion, multiple award-winning social impact strategist, highly sought-after political power player, and history-making policy architect. She wears multiple hats and debunks the outdated myth—you can't master multiple trades. She conceptualized, developed the legislative and social impact strategy for, and leads the groundbreaking CROWN Act movement on behalf of the CROWN Coalition she co-created, in addition to having spearheaded the legislative victory to codify the nation's first Office on African American Affairs.

A former adjunct professor who has taught African American Studies and psychology, Adjoa leverages cultural intelligence and behavioral insights to create meaningful systems change and develop winning campaigns. She was entrusted to serve as the Biden-Harris Campaign's National Advisor for Black Engagement and was then tapped to serve as the Black Engagement Director for the historic 59th Presidential Inaugural Committee.

A trusted advisor to local, state, and federal officials, Adjoa currently serves in yet another historic capacity as the first Black woman to serve as a Senior Advisor for Racial Equity to a U.S. Secretary. She previously served as senior policy advisor in the Executive Office of DC's mayor and is known for developing both high-profile and grassroots stakeholder coalitions to support policy change and social action.

She has provided subject matter expertise as an appointee to numerous commissions, committees, and advisory boards for notable entities including Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the US Small Business Administration, DC Commission on African American Affairs, Temple University, DC Commission for Women, and The National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc.! She has been appointed by multiple superintendents to the State Title I Committee of Practitioners and has been elected chair for six consecutive years. She chaired the Democratic Party's African American Leadership Council for 5 years and is faculty at the Congressional Black Caucus Institute.

Deemed one of the most powerful people globally by EBONY magazine in 2021 for her social justice work, she also graced the "special edition" cover of the iconic magazine!

Adjoa holds degrees in African American Studies, Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Applied Behavior Analysis. She is currently a doctoral candidate at the George Washington University with a plan to defend her dissertation in 3 months.

You can learn more at [www.adjoabasamoah.com](http://www.adjoabasamoah.com)



**Alex Holly**

Alex Holley joined the FOX 29 News team in the summer of 2014 as co-host of “Good Day Philadelphia.” Her signature segment, “Alex Around Town,” highlights popular and undiscovered places and events happening in the viewing area. She also co-hosts “The Feed AT Night,” since its debut in January, 2021.

Alex moved to Philly from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where she was a reporter and fill-in anchor for WMBF-TV’s morning news programs. Prior to that, she worked as an anchor, reporter, and producer at KOMU-TV in Columbia, Missouri. Alex anchored the innovative multi-source news website, Newsy.com, and is featured in the digital journalism display in the Newseum in Washington, D.C.

Since moving to Philadelphia, her work has garnered many awards, including a 2015 Emmy Award nomination for coverage of Pope Francis’ visit to Philadelphia. Philadelphia Magazine’s 2016 “Best of Philly” issue described her as ‘smart, funny and sassy’ in naming her “Best TV Personality,” an honor also bestowed on her in 2016 by the nation’s oldest society of professional journalists, The Philadelphia Pen & Pencil Club. That same year she was identified by NV (New Vision in Business) magazine as one of its “Movers & Shakers.”

A proud graduate of the University of Missouri, Alex carried a double minor in Sociology and Spanish. She was voted Mizzou’s Homecoming Queen and honored as a Mizzou39 member. She created a community service program for students called “SWIPES Make a Difference,” which continues to help college students donate unused meal plans to those in need in local communities. A third-generation member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Omega Omega Chapter, Alex is very popular in the local non-profit community where she continues the spirit of service to volunteer with many charitable organizations in the viewing area. She is also a member of the National Association of Black Journalists.

One of her favorite hobbies is travel. Alex has explored more than twelve different countries, and is proficient in Spanish, having studied at the Universidad de Salamanca at age 13. She believes this global exposure helps add a versatile dimension to her work, as she uses her knowledge of different places to enhance the perspectives of her stories.



**Desiree Chang**

Desiree Chang is a civil rights Mediator with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC). Prior to the PHRC, she worked as an adult Probation and Parole Officer with a specialized caseload of individuals with developmental and mental health disabilities. In addition, she has a background in substance abuse counseling. She has served as a facilitator for trauma informed responses and has been a certified trainer in Motivational Interviewing. Desiree's educational acquisitions include an Associate of Arts in Criminal Justice, summa cum laude, obtained from HACC Lancaster. As well as a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Master of Legal Studies from Drexel University, both magna cum laude. Much of Desiree's professional career has been in roles that include assistance for, or advocating of special interest groups. She is a graduate of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Development Program (2021) and a recipient of the PHRC Executive Director Excellence Award (2021). When not mediating discrimination cases, Desiree enjoys collecting passport stamps with the people she loves.





**Stacey Waters**

Stacey Waters began her career with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) investigating unlawful discrimination in 2008. She attended The Lincoln University and earned a Bachelor of Arts in English/Liberal Arts. She attended Shippensburg University and earned her Master of Science in Counseling/College Student Personnel. In 2014, she left the Commission to work as an Equal Opportunity Specialist at the PA Department of Labor and Industry. In 2018, she joined the PA Department of Corrections as Chief of Investigations and Training where she continued to investigate unlawful discrimination and provide a variety of trainings including, but not limited to, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training and Unconscious Bias Training. In September of 2021, she returned to PHRC as an Education and Outreach Coordinator educating the community about unlawful discrimination and other relevant topics. Stacey regularly volunteers in her community as a member of the Harrisburg Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.







**Ronnessa Edwards**

Ronnessa Edwards began her natural hair journey in August 2000, when she first wore her hair in dreadlocks as an expression of her Trinidadian background and West Indian Culture. Upon graduating from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown in 2004, Ronnessa worked as a Behavioral Specialist for a non-profit organization and a Youth Studies Counselor for the City of Philadelphia's Youth Study Center, a detention center for delinquent youth. In these roles, Ronnessa often mentored black and brown youth who identified as members of the LGBTQ community. Ronnessa began her civil service career as an Income Maintenance Caseworker for the PA Department of Public Welfare (now DHS), she was then promoted to Corrections Counselor for the Department of Corrections. Ronnessa now serves as a Human Relations Representative with the PA Human Relations Commission (PHRC), where her primary job duty is to supervise investigators and investigate complaints of discrimination in Housing, Employment, Public Accommodation, and Education. Ronnessa has been legally married for 8 years to her wife and partner of 18 years, she and her wife reside with their 1 - year old daughter in Philadelphia. She is currently obtaining her master's degree in clinical counseling at Eastern University and intends on applying her existing knowledge and experience, with her more recent education and skills, to increase her influence and contribute to the mission of the PA Human relations Commission.





**Zulay Rojas**

A member of the Beloved Community in her role as Special Assistant to the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. Her role affords her the opportunity to listen intently and assist those in need with empathy. During a selfless service to our nation in the Armed Forces her boots were stationed in the Mesopotamian sands of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. And after nine years of serving in the military, she hung up the uniform and started her journey onto civil service. As a Criminal Justice Scholar she discovered the importance of equal rights to all and joined the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. It is here that she can live out Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s realistic vision of the Beloved Community one in which "caring and compassion drive political policies that support worldwide elimination of poverty and hunger and all forms of bigotry and violence. A state of heart and mind, a spirit of hope and goodwill that transcends all boundaries and barriers and embraces all creation".





**Pam Gwaltney**

Pamela Gwaltney is Deputy Director of Compliance with the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (PCHR), the nation's oldest municipal civil rights agency. She manages the enforcement and administration of the Fair Practices Ordinance which protects the rights of over 17 categories of individuals prohibiting discrimination in housing/real property, employment, public accommodations and the delivery of city services. PCHR also enforces Philadelphia's Fair Chance Hiring law, Wage Equity Law and the Renter's Access Law. Previously, she worked as Education Attorney and Assistant Chief Counsel with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) and as Assistant Defender with the Defender Association of Philadelphia. Pamela is on the Board of Directors of Mount Saint Joseph Academy (DEI Committee Chair), Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts (Policy/Program Committees) and the Executive Board of the Temple Law Alumni Association. Memberships include the Forum of Executive Women and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated.

Pamela is a graduate of Hampton University in Virginia; Temple University's Beasley School of Law, and is licensed to practice law in Pennsylvania.





**Dana Prince, Esq.**

Ms. Prince is a passionate public servant who currently serves as a Prosecuting Attorney for the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission – Philadelphia Regional Office. As a Prosecuting Attorney she handles cases in all areas covered by the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act – housing, employment, public accommodation, and education. Prior to her time at the Commission, Ms. Prince served as a law clerk for the City of Harrisburg’s Law Bureau. Her time with the City of Harrisburg provided her with a wide range of legal experience in matters relevant to the City. Ms. Prince also served as a volunteer at the Dauphin County Bar Association, working in the Bar Association’s custody clinic, participating in their Homeless Outreach Program and assisting in the implementation of their Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts Program.





**Kris Wilson**

Kris Wilson is an Emmy Award-Wining filmmaker and former NFL professional football player. After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh with a Bachelor's (B.A.) degree in Economics, Wilson was drafted in the second round of the 2004 NFL Draft by the Kansas City Chiefs, where he played four seasons at the tight end position. Kris Wilson spent an additional 3 years playing for the San Diego Chargers, and one more with the Baltimore Ravens before retiring in 2012.

After retirement from football, Wilson earned his Juris Doctorate (J.D.) degree from UCLA Law, specializing in sports, entertainment, and media. Rather than practicing law, Wilson continued to study at UCLA School of Theatre, Film and Television, earning a Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) degree, with a focus on directing productions. Upon graduation, Kris Wilson began working as a producer and director at NFL Films, where he has worked on critically-acclaimed shows such as HBO's Hard Knocks series and Showtime's Inside The NFL, amongst other productions. In 2020, Wilson received a Sports Emmy in the category of Outstanding Trans-Media Coverage for his participation on 100 Greatest. Today, Wilson resides in the Philadelphia metropolitan area.





**Edquina Washington**

Edquina currently serves as Vice President of York City Council (York, PA). During her time on York City Council, she introduced and enacted “The CROWN Act” legislation, in collaboration with the City of York Human Relations Commission, ensuring protection against race-based hairstyles by extending statutory protection to hair texture and protective styles in the workplace and schools in the City of York, PA (May 2022). Edquina also introduced and enacted “Safe Time” legislation, expanding the sick leave policy for City of York employees that are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and similar concerns (July 2018). The City of York, PA is the first and only municipality in Central Pennsylvania to uphold this legislation. Edquina is an ordained Pastor, serving as Associate Pastor at The PORT Equipping Center. She serves as the Community Development & Housing Director at Crispus Attucks York. Edquina is the CEO and Founder of Redeemed Queen, LLC.





**Deb Brice**

Debra Brice a Clerical Assistant with PHRC since 2009 has worked in several departments; Education, Enforcement (Compliance), and Housing preparing cases for closure, handles Housing Hotline calls, processes HUD Deferrals and HUD Packets. In addition to her assignments, Debra wears many hats at PHRC's central office. Being an essential gear at PHRC, what inspires me is there by Grace keeps me going some time is being the first line of contact for persons in need. Folks will respond 'finally, I got a human voice'. Debra is a 2019 graduate of MLK. Jr Leadership Development Program and an active member of AFSCME Local 1420. She enjoys taking opportunities to continue to train and learn in this every changing working climate. Outside of work, Debra enjoys spending time with family and friends, clothing bank ministries, ballroom dancing, and walking her beloved doggie Liam.





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