



Reclaiming the Narrative: Black Women's Experiences at Work

Hosted by the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights (DCR)
March 22, 2023 @ 6:30PM – 8:00PM via ZOOM

Welcome & Opening Remarks

- **Tisha Leonardo-Santiago**, Interim Director of Outreach & Community Relations, New Jersey Division on Civil Rights

Panel Discussion

Moderator:

- **Patricia D. Williamson**, Community Relations Specialist, New Jersey Division on Civil Rights

Speakers:

- **Sharnett M. Clark**, Chief Probation Officer, Vicinage I - Atlantic/Cape May Counties
- **Dr. Sheri Davis**, Associate Director, Center for Innovation in Worker Organization
- **Jayné Johnson**, Director, Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging State of New Jersey, Office of the Governor
- **Mel Walker**, Strategic Initiatives and Enforcement Legal Specialist, New Jersey Division on Civil Rights

How to File a Complaint through NJBIAS

- **Kai Durant**, Community Relations Specialist, New Jersey Division on Civil Rights

Q&A

- **Patricia D. Williamson**, Community Relations Specialist, New Jersey Division on Civil Rights

Closing Remarks

- **Kai Durant**, Community Relations Specialist, New Jersey Division on Civil Rights

Conclusion

- Speakers & Bios below

Speakers & Biographies



Tisha M. Leonardo-Santiago

(she/they) is the Interim Director of Outreach & Community Relations and Bilingual Community Relations Specialist in New Jersey Division on Civil Rights' Community Relations Unit. A second-generation Latinx Hudson County native and a first-generation college graduate earning their undergraduate and graduate degrees in Criminal Justice from New Jersey City University.

In 2017, Tisha joined DCR as a Bilingual Investigator in the Enforcement Unit, served as the bilingual subject matter expert for the New Jersey Bias Investigation Access System (NJBIAS) Project that launched in November 2020, and now serves as the Statewide NJBIAS Community Liaison for the online complaint portal.

Tisha is based in Newark, and primary counties are Bergen, Hudson, Hunterdon, Passaic, Sussex and Union. Tisha leads their unit's strategic planning and programming initiatives on breastfeeding, pregnancy, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, national origin, nationality, ancestry, and religion (Islam). Tisha serves as the subject matter expert on Youth, Higher Education, Prisons and Policing, Latino/a/x, LGBTQI+, Muslim and Immigrant communities. They also serve as the DCR Youth Ambassador Program Coordinator.



Patricia D. Williamson

is a Community Relations Specialist and Community Mediator in the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights' Community Relations/Crisis Response Unit. Patricia is the unit's lead on programming initiatives for race and religion. She is based in Trenton, and her primary counties are Somerset, Warren, Monmouth, Middlesex, Mercer, Burlington, and Hunterdon. Prior to this position, Patricia was the New Jersey Counts Project Director at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. Patricia led the Institute's work to ensure a complete and accurate count of New Jersey's urban communities in the 2020 Census. Patricia was part of the Census 2020 NJ Coalition, and convened a sub-coalition of African American community-based organizations, non-

profits, and institutions (such as clergy). Patricia worked for over 20 years as a systems engineer in the optical networking area of various telecommunications companies in New Jersey. She was also an adjunct professor at Bloomfield College.

Patricia has plenty of voluntary experience in civic engagement and social justice. Patricia is the immediate past Eastern Region Social Action Committee Coordinator of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated. She led the advocacy arm of the regional Sorority chapters between Maine and DC, the US Virgin Islands, Germany, the Arabian Gulf, and southern and western Africa.

Patricia resides in central New Jersey. She earned a BA in Mathematics from Hampton University, an MS in Computer Science from Howard University, and an MA in Education and Human Development in the Educational Technology Leadership Program at The George Washington University.



Sharnett M. Clark

is the Chief Probation Officer for Vicinage I - Atlantic/Cape May Counties. Ms. Clark oversees and manages all Probation Division operations, including adult, juvenile, and child support enforcement. In April 2023, will mark 32 years of service for Ms. Clark with the Superior Court of New Jersey. In May 2011, she became the Assistant Family Division Manager in Atlantic County until her recent promotion to Chief Probation Officer for Atlantic-Cape May Counties in 2016. She has also held several positions over the course of her 20 years in the Essex Vicinage, where she started her career in the judiciary in 1991. Hon. Glenn Grant Acting Administrative Director, stated, "Ms. Clark has a dedication and commitment to not only the JOB's initiative but in all areas of our work. She is a true leader and has advanced the cause of

justice in Atlantic County and the other counties of our state by her embrace of the JOB's program".

In 2019, she became a certified court executive through the Institute for Court Managers (ICM) and became a certified court manager in 2002 during the first set of ICM classes to be held in the State of New Jersey. Ms. Clark is a former Coach for the Dale Carnegie's Skills for Success. She also co-chairs several subcommittees on a state and local level and a member of numerous organizations and committees. She works closely with various stakeholders on local and statewide initiatives to improve services for the public and the courts. Ms. Clark is a single mom, who grew up in Newark, NJ and received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Drew University and her Master of Arts degree from Seton Hall University.



Sheri Davis, Ph.D.

is the Associate Director with the Center for Innovation in Worker Organization. She is also Assistant Professor of Professional Practice with the Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department in the School of Management and Labor Relations at Rutgers University. She co-directs the WILL Empower (Women Innovating Labor Leadership) program, a joint initiative with the Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor at Georgetown University. As Co-director for WILL Empower, Davis hosts two Cohorts of Learning and Mentoring, one for women emerging leaders as well as one for women in executive leadership roles. Prior to coming to Rutgers, she was the Director for the Westside Communities Alliance in the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts at Georgia Tech.

A native Atlantan and interdisciplinary scholar-activist, Davis completed her doctorate in American Studies in the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts at Emory University. She also holds a M.A. in Women's Studies from The Ohio State University and B.A. in Psychology and Political Science from Spelman College. Her entry point into the labor movement was as a graduate student activist and leader at OSU during the CWA Local 4501 strike and thirty-day sit-in in 2000. Davis interned in the Field Mobilization division of the National AFL-CIO on the Global Justice Campaign; then as a Union Representative for university workers as well as a Grievance and Arbitrations Coordinator with SEIU District 82, Justice for Janitors Campaign. She successfully led collective bargaining campaigns at George Washington University and Howard University while serving as a Steering Committee member for DC Jobs with Justice.

Davis is leading a Global Transformational Leadership Project surveying the needs of non-traditional leaders in worker justice organizations focused on their development process and support network. She has been a member of the Crunk Feminist Collective since 2009 and currently serves as a board member of the National Black Worker Center, and is a steering committee member of the Advancing Black Strategist initiative and for the fledgling Philadelphia Black Worker Center.



Kai Durant

Kai Durant is a community relations specialist in the Community Relations Unit (CRU) at the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights. At CRU, she works to prevent acts of discrimination and bias based harassment through education and community engagement. She co-leads topics of housing, employment, disability, and the youth ambassador program. She completed her undergrad at Rutgers University with a focus Sociology and Gender Studies. Following undergrad, she completed her Master's in Social Work with a concentration on policy at Columbia University. She has experience in community outreach, advocacy, and organizing from her past work at a non-profit, community health center, and campaign.



Jayné J. Johnson, Esq.

serves as the inaugural Director of the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (Office of Equity), an office charged under Executive Order 265 to develop and support a statewide infrastructure for equity that covers State agencies, personnel employed by the State, and recipients of State funds. Through the coordination of policymaking processes within and across State agencies, guidance to the Governor and other State leaders, and the development of a strategic plan with measurable benchmarks, the Office of Equity works to strengthen the State workforce and improve outcomes for the people of New Jersey.

Johnson joined the Governor's Office with over fifteen years of legal, policy, and advocacy experience working in the nonprofit sector and in state government, in both the legislative and judicial branches. She has led strategic policy reforms, managed teams, and forged collaborative partnerships across diverse stakeholder groups in order to implement initiatives resulting in productive mission-driven processes and systems.

As part of her LLM program at The George Washington University School of Law, Johnson studied emerging best practices for employing supplier diversity as a proactive strategy in state procurement. A licensed New Jersey attorney, Johnson earned her JD from Rutgers University Law School in Newark, New Jersey and a BA in International Studies from Oakwood University.

Mel Walker

(she/her) is a legal specialist at Division on Civil Rights in the Strategic Initiatives and Enforcement Unit. She leads in discrimination issues involving race, disability, and health equity, related to policy and investigative work. It's common for Mel to be involved with other topic areas, such as housing, due to how her topics intersect with everything else.

Mel graduated from Seton Hall Law in 2020; during her last year, she served as Student Bar Association President and participated in the Health Law Clinic. Mel was a law clerk for the Honorable Sharifa R. Salaam, New Jersey Superior Court, Essex County, where she worked on dockets in the civil, criminal, and family divisions. During law school, Mel interned at multiple non-profits, such as the New York Environmental Law Project, where she worked on environmental justice issues in NYCHA housing, and the Greater Newark Health Care Coalition, where she investigated the treatment of homeless diabetics and the sources of lead poisoning in youth and adults.

Before law school, Mel worked in marketing as a project manager. She was a 2022 Affirmative Leader Fellow with the Public Rights Project. Ironically, her marketing background comes in handy more often than her legal background. After a long day of work, Mel has a cup of tea and hangs out with her wonderful cat, Grim.