

Documenters

POWERED BY CITY BUREAU & SIGNAL CLEVELAND

Commission on Black Women and Girls

Documenter name: Kellie Morris

Agency: [Commission on Black Women and Girls](#)

Date: Jan. 28, 2025

[See more about this meeting at Documenters.org](#)

Summary

- African American women have experiences that they want to share and create solutions to resolve, evidenced by responses to a year-long survey and participation in this meeting.
- African American women have similar experiences across social and economic lines, a survey found.
- Young girls in this meeting expressed interest in more opportunities to develop and grow civically.

Follow-Up Questions

- Will the commissioners identify one issue to address annually? For example, identifying resources for food insecurity, healthcare coordination, housing, employment opportunities, financial education, etc.
- What qualifications and skills should future commissioners develop in preparation to serve on the commission?
- Does the commission have a standing meeting schedule?
- Do the commissioners plan to develop relationships with the several local nonprofits that have a similar mission to serve African American women and girls?

Notes

Commission members:

- Chair: Kathryn Hall, vice president of Diversity and Inclusion, JACK Entertainment
- Vice Chair: Dr. Linda Bradley, Women's Health Institute, Cleveland Clinic
- Eugenia Cash, commission secretary, Social Support Services director, City of Cleveland
- Rev. Dr. Lisa Maxine Goods, senior pastor, Shiloh Baptist Church
- Taneisha Fair, associate, Racial Equity, The Center for Community Solutions

- Stephanie Howse-Jones, Cleveland City Council member, Ward 7
- Shameka Jones-Taylor, chief operating officer, Saint Martin de Porres High School
- Anastasia Sakairoun, student, Cleveland State University College of Law
- Dameyonna Willis, founder and executive director, Queen IAM
- Lita-Marie Wills, commissioner of Health Equity and Social Justice, City of Cleveland

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m. by the chair, Kathryn Hall. Hall had announced a 30-minute meet-and-greet between commission members and attendees at 4:30 p.m. Refreshments were provided. All commission members were present with the exception of Bradley and Fair. The meeting was attended by approximately 65 adults and 12 children. Attendees were asked to sign in and notified that the commissioners planned to use the sign-in sheets to contact those present. City Council Members Deborah Gray and Blaine Griffin also greeted attendees. The meeting was also [livestreamed on YouTube](#).

The chair announced that the agenda would be abbreviated to hear reports from two committees and then a presentation from Enlightened Solutions Co-founders Chinenye Nkemere and Bethany Studenic. The commissioners provided a platform for the co-founders to report the results of their 2024 community survey, [Project Noir](#).

Commission reports

Willis reported that the members are planning to host an engagement and listening session for the public in March 2025. Howse-Jones spoke about prospective locations and available dates for the event.

Jones-Taylor reported that the Membership & Recruitment Subcommittee had received applications to fill the vacant seats on the commission.

Presentation

The co-founders of Enlightened Solutions presented in a tag-team approach the findings of the Project NOIR survey. The purpose was to amplify the voices of Black women in Northeast Ohio and see if the region still [remained the worst in America for Black women](#). The survey was distributed from February - April 2024. The team attended seven events with more than 500 attendees total in 2024. They reported the participation of several nonprofits in Northeast Ohio and beyond. The collaborations resulted in 1,324 survey responses from African American women. They reported that this project demonstrated extensive growth from their previous survey in 2021, which received approximately 450 responses.

They said previous studies reporting on the “condition” of African American women recorded responses from statistical information from resources such as the U.S. Census but did not survey the women directly. As a result, Project Noir was developed to gather quantitative data and qualitative data using various methods such as open-ended questions. Ultimately, the team would like to host the survey annually.

The survey touched on topics including employment, healthcare and education.

Nkemere shared an African Proverb, “Those who live in the attic know where the roof leaks.” The proverb illustrates the need to speak directly to those affected when working on solutions.

Studenic said the survey responses show that what Black women experience is like a script; it’s predictable and measurable. One effect of these surveys is that they validate one’s experience by showing that more than one person has had a similar experience. Therefore, a woman does not have to feel that an experience or outcome is their fault.

Studenic said Enlightened Solutions is interested in supporting legislation that addresses issues that affect African American women. She specifically mentioned the [equal pay legislation](#) introduced in Cleveland City Council this week. She also said that Enlightened Solutions is committed to the issues of African American women although members of many other communities have sought their services.

Question and answer period

The commissioners and presenters allowed attendees to ask questions. Representatives of each group stated several times that they were very interested in the concerns of the community. Veronica Thornton expressed concern that all demographics represented by African American women be considered. To her comment, Hall replied that every member of the commission is committed to ensuring that all voices are heard. Hall reiterated the need for community members to attend the listening sessions.

Leaders of [Motivated and Empowered, Inc.](#), brought nine young women who were invited to sit at the table with the commissioners. Several of them spoke and thanked the presenters. They agreed that they are made to feel as though they have to be the adult in the room and explain situations or help others at school. One young woman also admitted to feelings of suicidal ideations and anxiety.

Others asked that a focus on family be a concern for the commission and for future

surveys. The speaker said that if we don't have families, then we don't have communities. The topic of mental health was also proposed as an area of concern.

The final question came from Jones-Taylor, who asked the attendees to select the date and time for the proposed March listening session. March 29 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. was the proposed date and time.

If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at cleDOCUMENTERS@gmail.com with "Correction Request" in the subject line.