



ERIE COUNTY COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN PRESENTS:

# RACIAL EQUITY, DIVERSITY, EQUITY + INCLUSION

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION SERIES:

**THE TRUTH:**  
WOMEN OF COLOR DISCUSS  
NAVIGATING LEADERSHIP

**MARCH 23, 2023**

**5:00PM - 6:30PM**

• **BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM** •

I MUSEUM COURT, BUFFALO, NY • 14216



## **THE RACIAL EQUITY, DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION SERIES**

The Erie County Commission on the Status of Women (ECCSW) has created a new series focusing on the multiple aspects of Racial Equity and DEI work being done in our Western New York Community.

We launched the series in October of 2022. Tonight's Women's History Month roundtable discussion with Women of Color leaders marks the fourth in our series.

Women of Color occupy a broad range of senior leadership roles in the public and private sector across the United States. This evening we will hear five women in our community discuss their journey to leadership while navigating structural racism and sexism. They will share some of the challenges and successes they have experienced along the way as well as offer their perspective on what real systems change looks like.

We hope the series will provide all of us the opportunity to take a deep dive into the complexity of these issues. We approach these necessary conversations through several lenses including: power dynamics, community stewardship, racial and gender dynamics and systems change.

Our goal is to provide a space to engage our community members in robust, mutually respectful and candid conversations about doing this work; the challenges and setbacks, the victories and what the future may look like.

Thank you for participating!

Karen King, Commissioner of Public Advocacy and  
Executive Director, ECCSW

### **ECCSW ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS**

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Maritza Vega



## **JASMINE CHEN**

VICE CHAIR, BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS OF CCWNY;  
EXECUTIVE ADVISOR,  
CHINESE CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE

My name is Jasmine Chen. I was born in Fuzhou, China, and immigrated to the United States with my family as a teenager. In the process of growing up, I witnessed the struggles of the first generation of immigrants. I then faced down the challenges given to the second generation. I have rich work experience. I have worked in various sales, lending and wealth management related positions at HSBC, PHH, and Seneca Mortgage. I became a Howard Hanna real

estate agent in 2006, and thanks to my extensive business knowledge, I have achieved good results in this industry. These efforts have won me various awards (see appendix) and recognition in the field.

In addition to my job, I spend time actively participating in and promoting cultural and business exchanges as well as various charity activities in the local Buffalo area. In 2017, I joined the Chinese Club of WNY. In 2019, I became a board director. Also, I am the founder and the main organizer for the Asian Food and Culture Festival. Currently, I am the vice chair of the board of directors of CCWNY and the executive advisor of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. During this period, with everyone's support and help from the Chinese community, I have grown and learned tremendously.

I am a mother of two kids. As a modern woman, we have to take care of our family and be financially independent! Let us work together and share in each other's victories!



**LISA FRONCKOWIAK  
J.D.**

INTERIM CHIEF  
DIVERSITY OFFICER,  
EQUITY AND CAMPUS  
DIVERSITY  
BUFFALO STATE  
UNIVERSITY

Lisa Fronckowiak currently serves as Interim Chief Diversity Officer and has been with Buffalo State University since 2010. Prior to her current role, she served as Director of Student Accessibility Services as well as Deputy Chief Diversity Officer. Lisa holds her Ed.M., from the University at Buffalo School of Graduate Education, and a J.D. and LL.M. from the University at Buffalo School of Law.

Lisa is passionate about Equity, Diversity and Social Justice, and is dedicated to promoting educational access. In her free time, Lisa serves as a board member for the Academy of Human Rights, as well as the Buffalo State Childcare Center.



**BARBARA  
MILLER-WILLIAMS**

COMPTROLLER,  
CITY OF BUFFALO

Barbara Miller-Williams was elected as the first African American and Woman Comptroller in the history of the City of Buffalo in November 2019. Prior to serving as the City of Buffalo Comptroller, Ms. Miller-Williams served as the 1st District of Erie County Legislator and was the first African American Woman Chairperson of the Erie County Legislature. She began her political career as the first African American Woman City of Buffalo Ellicott District Councilmember.

In addition, she retired from the United States Army as a Master Sergeant/Equal Opportunity Advisor and Patrol Officer with the Buffalo Police Department.

She earned educational degrees from Bryant and Stratton Business Institute and Buffalo State University. As Comptroller, she has completed numerous local/national government finance office trainings. Ms. Miller-Williams has been noted for her leadership and community achievement and is a member of numerous organizations including Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and the Erie County (NY) Chapter of the LINKS, Incorporated, Government Finance Officers Association and the Albright Knox AKG Art Museum.

Her favorite quote is

*"I am just an ordinary person who has been blessed to do extraordinary things."*



**CRYSTAL  
RODRIGUEZ-DABNEY**

DEPUTY MAYOR AND  
CHIEF OF STAFF,  
CITY OF BUFFALO

Crystal Rodriguez-Dabney was born and raised in East Buffalo. After facing many challenges, through her own grit and determination, she joined the U.S. Navy, and earned both her undergraduate and law degrees.

Despite vowing never to return to her hometown of Buffalo, Rodriguez-Dabney eventually did return, with plans in mind to help improve the City of Buffalo via intersectional, progressive policies.

Rodriguez-Dabney served as a senior staffer in the Brown administration for over a decade,

eventually being appointed as the City of Buffalo's first Chief Diversity Officer. Prior to that, she served as the Executive Director of the City's Commission on Citizens' Rights & Community Relations.

In 2018, she joined Buffalo State College as Chief of Staff to College President Katherine S. Conway-Turner. In June 2020, she was appointed as the College's Chief Diversity Officer, in addition to her Chief of Staff duties.

As Buffalo State College's Chief Diversity Officer, Rodriguez-Dabney assisted the college in eliminating barriers based on race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and other differences by creating intentional, more productive guidelines. As overseer of the college's Equity and Diversity Program, she created a resource center to address the needs of historically underrepresented students and would-be allies; she worked with various stakeholders to restructure initiatives surrounding anti-racist topics and anti-racist general education classes; she helped develop a diversity and inclusion coaching program for faculty; and she established connections with diverse

alumni across the country. Her Chief of Staff duties included oversight of all operations in the President's Office; she worked to support and implement the President's mission across campus; and she helped execute the President's response to national reckonings of racial inequities and the Black Lives Matter movement.

In April 2022, Mayor Byron W. Brown appointed Rodriguez-Dabney as Deputy Mayor and Chief of Staff. In that role, she reports directly to Mayor Brown, implementing his public policies and coordinating the operations of City departments. The position involves confidential and highly sensitive issues, requiring tact, discretion and responsiveness in carrying out the Mayor's governance philosophy and public mission within City Hall, and in dealing with executive level public and elected officials, representatives of the business community, constituents, and others.

In her roles as Deputy Mayor and Chief of Staff, Rodriguez-Dabney uses her comprehensive knowledge of City government structure and current public issues affecting local government.

She also utilizes her understanding of management and administrative practices, government budget and finance principals on a daily basis to analyze and develop public issue positions, prepare comprehensive reports, develop and maintain good working relationships, and engage in public speaking. Her guiding principle has always been to give all people a seat at the table and help people from diverse backgrounds connect more purposefully.

Rodriguez-Dabney has always been widely involved in the WNY community in a variety of ways. She collaborated with Buffalo Public Schools to create the City's official anti-bullying slogan, served as architect of the City's Opportunity Pledge Campaign, and Gender Transition Guidelines for transitioning City employees;

In both her professional and volunteer work, Rodriguez-Dabney advocates fiercely for historically underrepresented groups and contributes time and energy toward the betterment of the community. Her work focuses on championing all people and bringing groups together to move forward intentionally.



**TALIA RODRIGUEZ,  
J.D.**

JOURNALIST AND  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,  
WEST SIDE PROMISE  
NEIGHBORHOODS

Talia Rodriguez traces her commitment to public service to her grandmother, who emigrated from Puerto Rico in difficult circumstances and dedicated herself to bettering her community, a journey that led her to march with Martin Luther King Jr. and to join the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963.

Rodriguez lives her commitment: serving on the board of the Boys and Girls Club of Buffalo, Open Buffalo, the West Side Business and Taxpayers Association, and the Western

New York Peace Center, assisting in planning the women's march.

Talia writes a regular column for all the Spanish language papers in Western and Central New York. She created New York's only Latina Exclusive Business Directory, which provides for the distribution of micro-funds through a crowd-raising platform.

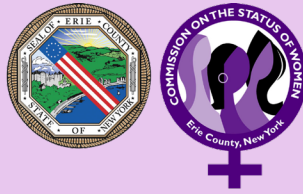
A public policy analyst, Rodriguez holds a Juris Doctorate from SUNY Buffalo and a bachelor's degree in Political Science from St. John Fisher College. Talia also earned a Master's Degree in Social Policy from SUNY Empire State College while working in both human trafficking and domestic violence courts.

Talia is a fifth-generation West Sider and the mother to a five year-old and they are both dedicated to West Side Baseball.

She is a Humanist who believes in the power of serving others through love and understanding. This is a quote by her favorite author which she feels sums up her drive and fuels her passion:

*"As you enter positions of trust and power, dream a little before you think." - Toni Morrison*





# MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH!

This year we are celebrating:

***Women Who Tell Our Stories***