



Motherhood Roundtable

May 2, 2024 | 10:00AM CT

Speaker Bios

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Caroline Roberts – Senior Staff Attorney, CHILDREN AT RISK

Caroline Roberts serves as the Senior Staff Attorney at Children at Risk, advocating for policies that positively impact the lives of children. Caroline also serves as vice-chair on the Houston American Constitution Society board. Caroline attended New York University School of Law, where she served as symposium editor for the Environmental Law Journal. Before law school, Caroline graduated with a B.A. in psychology from Duke University. After graduation, she moved to Beijing to teach English to

children and then to Shanghai where she taught writing and Western culture at Jiaotong University.



Michelle Harrell – Maternal & Child Health Assistant Program Manager, Harris County Public Health

Michelle Harrell is a seasoned public health professional with over a decade of community engagement experience. For the past two years, she has served as a key figure at the Harris County Public Health department, with help leading the development of the groundbreaking Maternal and Child Health Program. Michelle's visionary leadership has resulted in the success of the first-of-its-kind program within the department, focusing on improving health outcomes for mothers and

children in the community. Under her guidance, the program has seen remarkable success and the implementation of innovative initiatives to address a wide range of maternal and child health needs. Michelle's passion for public health and her commitment to the community well-being make her a respected leader, sharing insights into her transformative work and the importance of collaborative efforts in promoting health equity.



Dr. Nicole R. Townsend – DNP, MSN, Ed., FNE, SANE-C, Professor of Nursing, Lone Star College, Kingwood and Social Action Member of North Harris County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Dr. Nicole R. Townsend, DNP, MSN, Ed., FNE, SANE-C is a distinguished voice in the fields of Women's Health, Forensic Nursing, Sexual Assault Nursing, and health policy and advocacy. With over 19 years of dedicated experience, Dr. Townsend has emerged as a prominent figure, particularly known for her tireless efforts in

addressing black maternal health disparities. Currently serving as a distinguished professor of Nursing in Houston, TX, she works to inspire future nurses to become advocates for culturally competent healthcare practices within their institutions and communities.

As an esteemed member of North Harris County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Dr. Townsend actively contributes to the Social Action committee, where her passion for community empowerment and social justice shines through. Her commitment to advancing health equity and improving outcomes for marginalized populations is reflected in both her professional endeavors and her philanthropic engagements.



D'Andra Willis – Birth Justice Program Lead, The Afiya Center. Full Spectrum Doula and Childbirth Educator, Southern Roots Doula Collective.

D'Andra Willis is a passionate and dedicated full spectrum doula and childbirth educator, committed to advocating for social justice and health equity for all. She is a trained doula with Southern Roots Doula Collective powered through The Afiya Center, where she offers a positive voice and support for her community.

D'Andra's path as a support provider in birthing began long before she even knew what the word "doula" meant. Her desire to become a childbirth educator and doula arose after years of supporting friends and family. She believes that each person is the expert of their own experience and strives to empower individuals and families to advocate for their bodily autonomy throughout the prenatal, birth, and postpartum periods.

As a full spectrum doula, D'Andra provides emotional, physical, and spiritual preparation for birth, embracing each birthing person's vision while holding sacred space for them during their journey. She counts it a privilege to serve all birthing people in every capacity and sees birth as a rite of passage.

In addition to her work as a doula and childbirth educator, D'Andra has a wealth of experience in education and cosmetology. She was an Early Childhood Educator and Director from 2003 to 2010, and in 2011 she started working as a Senior Cosmetology Instructor at I.T.S Academy of Beauty until 2014. From 2015 to 2017, she served as the Regional Artistic Director at Regis Salon Corporation.

D'Andra's passion for birth work and commitment to social justice and health equity led her to embark on a journey to become a midwife. She is currently enrolling to become a Certified Birth Assistant and looks forward to continuing to serve her community in this new capacity.

Through her diverse background and experiences, D'Andra brings a unique perspective and unwavering dedication to her work as a doula, childbirth educator, and future midwife. She is truly a blessing to everyone she meets.



Dr. Theresa Morris, Ph.D. – Director & Professor of Social and Women's Gender Studies, Texas A&M University

Theresa Morris Ph.D. is Professor of Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies, Presidential Impact Fellow, and Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Texas A&M University, where she conducts research on gender, reproduction, and birth. Her first book, *Cut It Out: The C-Section Epidemic in America* (NYU Press 2013), was positively reviewed in several venues, including the *New York Times*, and her second book, *Health Care in Crisis: Hospitals, Nurses, and the Consequences of Policy Change* (NYU Press 2018), received an Honorable Mention for the 2019 Adele E. Clarke Book Award. She has also published articles in journals, including *American Sociological Review*, *Birth*, *Social Problems*, *Women's Health Issues*, and the *California Law Review*. Dr. Morris teaches graduate and undergraduate classes covering Reproduction and Birth, Gender, Gender and Health, and Medical Sociology.