

PHILADELPHIA

# STYLE

PHILADELPHIA'S PREMIER

STYLE & FASHION

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Cheryl Ann Wadlington  
wants women to stay  
true to themselves.



# STAYING TRUE

Cheryl Ann Wadlington shows her inner beauty.

Attending shows at Fashion Week in New York City was nothing out of the ordinary for Cheryl Ann Wadlington, but there was one particular fashion show on Sept. 11, 2001, that changed her forever. Seeing the festivities of life on the catwalk juxtaposed with utter chaos and unprecedented catastrophe jolted something inside of her. She decided to reposition her talents to address an audience who needed her services most.

After decades of working in the international business of "kiss kiss" and "faaaaabulous," Wadlington changed her life to start an image consulting business that caters to mostly African-American women. Staying true to her passion for fashion, yet keeping a firm footing on close-to-the-heart values, she started Evoluer, a niche business based in Philadelphia that helps harness and present her clients' inner beauty to the world. Her list of star clients includes Queen Latifah, Jill Scott, Mary J. Blige and Angie Stone, but talk to her about her craft and it becomes apparent that she's not in it to make celebrities look good.

According to Wadlington, style isn't about what you wear or whom you wear. It's about "owning your look," because, she says, spirituality and individualism play a big part when adopting a new sense of self. "The face of the American woman is changing. People of color represent half of the population in metropolitan cities. I don't tell my clients how to look. The image they portray reflects their unique lifestyles."

For a fee, Wadlington helps women define their look by making adjustments in their clothing, makeup and hair, but the benefits she provides affect more than the superficial aspects of a woman's look. She says it's about making women comfortable and confident. She turns girls into ladies. She teaches frustrated, heavy women to love themselves. "Sometimes it's all about the undergarment," she laughs. Wadlington readies clueless gals for corporate America and she shows new moms how to embrace the changes in their bodies. Her philosophy is refreshingly simple: "Stay true to who you are. Embrace your culture. Love your imperfections."

Although she advises clients to stay true to themselves, she has some caveats. "What works on the pages of magazines isn't right for everyone, especially those women looking for promotions in the workplace. We all can't be Lil' Kim... Everyone craves attention, but it's important not to confuse beauty and booty."

The youngest of six children, Wadlington's own style is ever changing. She is attracted to natural things and lately she's less about labels and more about soul. Wadlington's inner style comes courtesy of her lifestyle. She likes hanging out with close friends, spending time with her new husband in their Old City home, collecting perfume bottles and hunting for antiques. Those may not sound like the hobbies of a fashion force, but in the City of Brotherly Love, she's a sister who stands out. —*Jami Slotnick*