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Women's Pipeline for Change

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Profiles in Leadership: Women of Color Elected to Office in Massachusetts

*A Collaboration between the Center for
Women in Politics and Public Policy
and the Women's Pipeline for Change*

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

Celebrating twenty years of contributions to promoting women's leadership and participation in public life, UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies works to advance public policies that make a difference in the lives of all women. Through its innovative educational programs, action-oriented research, and public forums, it works to ensure that the voices, talents, and experiences of all women are valued and included in policy making and political life. In partnership with nonprofit organizations, private companies, and governments at all levels, the center works to strengthen democratic values in public life and build a prosperous economy that increases access and opportunity for all. All center initiatives and research explore the impact of gender, race/ethnicity, and class on policymaking and politics.

A major focus of the center's work is on the particular contributions and challenges faced by women of color and under-represented women in the public sphere. A recent example of this work was the Pathways to Political Leadership for Women of Color project that was completed in 2013. Visit: www.umb.edu/pipeline for resources that inform, inspire, and support the public leadership of women of color. These dynamic resources were developed out of the first collaborative project between the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy and the Women's Pipeline for Change.

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ABOUT THE WOMEN'S PIPELINE FOR CHANGE

Created in 2008, the Women's Pipeline for Change is a coalition focused on building a sustainable infrastructure to support women of color as they enter, navigate and move up the pipeline of public leadership in Massachusetts. The Pipeline is the only organization or vehicle focused exclusively on supporting women of color in public leadership in Massachusetts. We envision a consistent stream of women of color entering public life and leading their communities at all levels, resulting in a vibrant and inclusive political system and sensible policy and budget priorities for children, families, and communities.

Our collaborative makes available a wealth of resources to women of color leaders interested in public leadership: Training, Mentoring & Leadership Development Opportunities, Networking Events, Online Informational Tools and Materials, Strategic Research on Women of Color in Political Leadership, and Internships that Enhance Learning Experiences.

Women's Pipeline for Change, c/o MassVOTE,
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PROFILES IN LEADERSHIP

Women of Color Elected to Office in Massachusetts

SEPTEMBER 2015

A collaboration between the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy
and the Women's Pipeline for Change

*This guide was made possible by a Public Service Grant from the Office of the Vice Provost for
Research and Strategic Initiatives and Dean of Graduate Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston.*

Acknowledgements

Many individuals contributed to the conception and production of this guide. The project required flexibility, patience, commitment, and a deep passion for social justice. I have seen those qualities in abundance from all who have worked together for over a year to transform an idea into a reality – their hard work has created a publication that will be a catalyst for equity, inclusion, and action.

First, I want to thank the women who are profiled in this guide. Each of them contributed their valuable time, critical personal and political data, and most importantly their reflections on being women of color electeds. I am deeply appreciative of their willingness to participate in this project and share their wisdom. I want to extend a heartfelt and special thank you to the women who agreed to be interviewed and shared the joys and challenges of public service. I am grateful to all for their candor, their enormous public contributions, their personal sacrifices, and their profound courage.

This guide is the result of collaboration between the Women's Pipeline for Change (WPC) and the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy (CWPPP). The center is truly honored to partner with The Pipeline, a statewide coalition committed to advancing the public leadership of women of color, created through the visionary leadership of Maria Jobin-Leeds and the Access Strategies Fund. It is outstanding in building a community-based organization that combines grassroots organizing, leadership development, and electoral politics. It is effective, innovative and impactful, and gives us all hope for a future in which the contributions of women of color are nurtured and recognized – its existence and success gives us hope for a better tomorrow.

I am very grateful to all the members and the Board of the Pipeline, and I particularly want to thank Joyce Ferriabough-Bolling who has played an outstanding and pivotal role at each stage of this project. Joyce contributed countless hours to this project – thinking through every aspect of the guide, contacting key women across the state, and offering her own expertise as a journalist, media expert, and long-time activist in Massachusetts politics. I simply could not have asked for a more dedicated and talented partner. Her own life and her own leadership on behalf of women, women of color, and others who are still excluded from positions of power in our society, is truly an inspiration to all of us.

There are several other women from the Pipeline whose contributions have been crucial to the development of the guide. In particular, I want to thank Cheryl Clyburn Crawford and Suzanne Lee who have worked tirelessly in their role as members of the Pipeline's Executive Committee. I also want to express a special thank you to Ileana Cintrón and acknowledge the pioneering work she did to develop the initial database that served as the foundation for the creation of the profiles. Her substantial contributions endure in these pages.

There has been no one more crucial to the execution and production of this guide than Christa Kelleher, Research Director of CWPPP. Her professionalism, social science expertise, and organizational skills are evident in every component of the guide. I thank Christa for her dedication, tireless work, and leadership of a formidable and talented team of researchers and assistants to create this path-breaking publication. These women contacted women electeds and former electeds, managed the database, created the profile pages, combed public and private data sources, and conducted interviews. My sincere thanks to all members of this dedicated team. Key members include: Rose Adhiambo Nyaondo, PhD Candidate, Public Policy Program, McCormack Graduate School, UMass Boston (MGS/UMB); Ana María Sánchez Rodríguez, MSc, PhD Candidate, Public Policy Program, MGS/UMass Boston; Jessica Toglia, MS, CWPPP Research Assistant; Anny N. Rodriguez Vioria, UMass Boston undergraduate; Helena J. Berbano, MPA, UMass Boston; Michelle Chouinard, UMass Boston undergraduate; and Muqaddisa Mehreen, PhD candidate, Public Policy Program, MGS/UMass Boston.

This team was greatly enhanced by the work of two wonderful interns from the Women's Pipeline for Change. I thank Jasmine Lee, BA, and Ruthann Leverett, for their time, thoughtful input, and contributions to the Guide.

As with every long-in-the-making publication, there is a “behind the scenes” team that makes all the data, the words, and the research come together in a beautiful, accessible format. For outstanding design work, I thank Rose Coveney and Rob Smolinsky. For administrative oversight, I thank Paul M. Mullane, Director of Financial Management for Research and Graduate Studies, and for facilitating the community partnership and process, I thank Michael K. Gaughan, Contract Administrator, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects. For overall project administration and support, I thank senior leaders of CWPPP, especially Denise Schultz and Muna Killingback.

Finally, every member of the team from the Pipeline and CWPPP joins me in expressing our collective thanks to the Chancellor, J. Keith Motley, and, Zong-Guo Xia, the Vice Provost for Research for Research and Strategic Initiatives and Dean of Graduate Studies, of the University of Massachusetts Boston for providing funding for this research by awarding CWPPP a Public Service Grant Award in 2014. Their support – both moral and financial – is deeply appreciated as an essential ingredient to the completion of this guide.

Ann Bookman, PhD
Director, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy
September 24, 2015

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Preface

I cannot express how excited I am by the publication of this first-of-its-kind guide to **Women of Color Elected Officials in Massachusetts**, the brainchild of the wonderful and dynamic **Ann Bookman**, Director of UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy (CWPPP). This project represents the Women's Pipeline for Change's second successful collaboration with the center. The first, the Participatory Research Fellowship, was initiated by the Pipeline and supported by the generosity of Access Strategies and the magnificent **Maria Jobin-Leeds** whose commitment to diversity set the groundwork for the creation and development of the Women's Pipeline for Change, a unique organization designed to help cultivate and support leadership among women of color.

The Fellowship, under the direction of CWPPP's former director **Carol Hardy-Fanta** and Assistant Director **Donna Stewartson**, helped guide and support the work of Fellows **Sheneal Parker**, **Elizabeth Cardona**, **Mayor Lisa Wong**, **City Councilor Gladys Lebrón-Martínez** and **School Committee Member Martina Cruz** in the research and exploration of issues that impact women of color as they strive to increase their numbers in elective office and in other leadership roles. Then, as now with this publication, it has been **Christa Kelleher**, the extraordinarily talented CWPPP Research Director who provided both the direction and the glue that tied everything together for both collaborations.

I am privileged to have been involved in actively supporting Ann and Christa in the development and creation of this publication on behalf of the Pipeline and as a board member of CWPPP. One of the many values of this publication is that it introduces the reader to a range of phenomenal elected women, all under one roof, so to speak. It builds on the extraordinary work of former Pipeline Manager Ileana Cintrón who, in 2012, produced the event: Celebrating 40 Years Of Women Of Color Elected To Office in Massachusetts (1972-2013), attended by more than 100 women including many current and former elected officials. From the pages of this publication, many of the women speak to us, offering insightful words of wisdom and encouragement that we hope will help ignite a spark that will inspire current and future generations of women of color to consider running for political office.

The women who grace these pages deserve to be celebrated not only for their service, but also for their challenges, sacrifices, triumphs, and accomplishments, many times against great odds. They broke color and gender barriers. A few even crossed the territorial lines of Massachusetts' notorious and sometimes impenetrable 'blue' state party politics. Motivated by a fundamental desire for change and a call to serve, some distinguished themselves by making political history as a result of their runs for office, becoming the "first" and sometimes "only" woman of color to run for and win elected office. We applaud their effort.

But despite the many positives associated with overcoming obstacles to win political office, the number of women of color elected to office today not only in Massachusetts but throughout the country remains dismal, diminishing diversity of opinion, political discourse and stunting effective and inclusive public service. There can be no doubt that much work remains to be done to increase the ranks of women of color in elected office. It underscores the value and importance of the work of the Pipeline and its goal of building a sustainable infrastructure to support more women of color entering and navigating the pipeline to public leadership. On the date of this publication's release, there is only one African American woman and one Asian American serving in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. In the State Senate, there is only one multi-ethnic woman and one Haitian American. On the Boston City Council, only recently, an African American woman became the first to be elected in its 100-year history, no doubt helping to pave the way for the election of a second woman of color, an Asian American. So now there are only two women serving on the Council. There has been only one woman of color, an Asian American, elected mayor in the history of Massachusetts.

It is the Pipeline's hope that this publication, together with the Pipeline's ongoing leadership development, networking, and mentoring opportunities will inspire and encourage current and next generation of women of color to run for office and to be encouraged to seek leadership opportunities that increase gender diversity in all areas of our society.

Joyce Ferriabough Bolling

Executive Committee
The Women's Pipeline for Change

Joyce Ferriabough Bolling is a media and political strategist who has been instrumental in helping support the successful groundbreaking elections of several women of color to elected office. She serves as a member of the Executive Committee of The Women's Pipeline for Change with fellow members, Cheryl Clyburn Crawford, Executive Director of MassVote, and award winning educator and community builder Suzanne Lee. She wishes to acknowledge the extraordinary women who serve as board members and advisors and otherwise support the Pipeline by their commitment and contributions.

OPB MEMBERS: Patricia Montes, Lydia Lowe, Carin Schiewe, Celina Barrios-Millner, Diana Hwang, Gloribell Mota, Jasmine Lopez, Renata Teodoro, Maria Elena Letona, Samantha Washburn-Baronie, Georgia Hollister-Isman

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PIPELINE INTERNS: Jasmine Lee, Ruthann Leverett

Introduction

There are two narratives that provide the story behind this guide. These stories may seem contradictory at first, but they are both true: it is only by telling both sides of the story that we can understand the full meaning and impact of the experiences of the women pictured in the pages that follow.

On the one hand, there is a story of exclusion, marginalization, and lack of representation of women of color in governing bodies all across Massachusetts – from local to federal office. The Massachusetts Legislature has existed since 1780, yet we have only had 14 women of color elected as state representatives and/or state senators to date. The General Court, as it is called, has 40 senators and 160 representatives, and, in 2015, only four women of color currently hold these seats. Of the thousands of individuals who have served or currently serve on local governing bodies in Massachusetts, only 81 women of color have been elected to serve in municipal offices such as city council, board of aldermen, board of selectmen, mayor, and school committee. In fact, the vast majority of women of color and women from diverse backgrounds who have been elected in the Commonwealth have been elected at the local level. While they have played important roles on these local governing bodies, only two women of color have been popularly elected mayor and only one has been elected sheriff. No women of color have been elected to statewide office – such as Treasurer, Attorney General, or Governor – or to either chamber of the U.S. Congress.

There has been some documentation and research about gender disparities in political representation at the state and local levels, but there has not been in-depth research on how gender and race/ethnicity intersect leading to greater disparities for women of color in Massachusetts. The

experiences, needs, and voices of women from diverse and often underrepresented communities have largely been absent from discourse on many issues that directly impact women of color, their families, and their neighbors. An effort to eliminate both gender- and race/ethnicity-based exclusion from governance has been launched in Massachusetts, and it is our hope that this publication will catalyze its growth.

The second story that must be told – and retold and amplified – is that women of color in Massachusetts have been stepping forward to serve the public since the early 1970s, declaring their decision to run for office and winning local and state elections. The profiles in this guide provide a window into the backgrounds, experiences, and careers of 94 women who have seized opportunities, overcome barriers, and/or cleared the path for others. The profiles also showcase the tremendous contributions made by women who have served. The thematic analysis that follows utilizes these women's own words to explain their diverse forms of leadership.

In order to gain a richer and fuller picture of the women profiled here, and to better understand their struggles and accomplishments, perspectives and insights, we conducted interviews with 22 women of color who have been elected to office in the Commonwealth. These women spoke about what drew them to public office, and candidly discussed their journeys as candidates and as elected officials. And they shared their hopes and concerns, as well as words of encouragement and advice, as they reflected on what it would take to get more women of color and those from diverse underrepresented communities into elected office at all levels of government in Massachusetts.

THE DECISION TO SEEK PUBLIC OFFICE: What Motivates Women of Color to Run

Three key factors led the women profiled in this book to seek elective office: 1) the need to address a key social, economic, or political issue(s) about which they were concerned; 2) the lack of voice or representation for women of color and communities of color; and 3) a strong commitment to serving the public and working on behalf of their communities. The underlying theme in many of their comments was, “this is about public service and not about me.”

Many of these women were activists before deciding to enter electoral politics and this activism led them to seek a seat in government. For some, their role as mothers was significant as they articulated concerns about the needs and safety of their own children and other children. One woman explained how crime in her community compelled her to run for office:

“I felt that there was a need, a community need, but I also felt there was a personal need in the sense that my neighborhood, my community, was having great difficulties at that time. In 1990, crime was at its highest... [it] reached 150 homicides that year. And so I was worried about crime. I had two little children two little babies—and I was worried about them.”

Another woman became active with a group of mothers who were concerned about the lack of educational opportunities for their children. She felt there was a limit to what could be done by mothers who did not hold official positions in government.

“It came to a point where... we had some hopes about the educational system that we didn't think were necessarily available [to everyone] and

we decided that we wanted to become a unified voice and find a venue where we could express the concerns that we had directly to those who could possibly hear our concerns and address our concerns.”

Whether motivated by one issue, or broader community needs, many women went through a similar process. One woman elected in the late 1980s explained her own evolution: “I was an advocate first, an activist second, and a political person third.” Whether as mothers or community members, many women's decisions to run were rooted in their life experiences. As one woman explained: “What informed my heart's work that ultimately led me to saying yes to running... are my life experiences.”

Another woman described how she was motivated to run by the need to bring marginalized issues to the center of public awareness and explained her role in changing the public conversation:

“I can usher in a diverse perspective and in turn a diverse discourse. It was my desire to inform the consciousness of people and bring a level of awareness to a subset of issues that I felt were affecting all of us, but people were not aware that they are issues that had been traditionally marginalized like human trafficking or teen pregnancy, domestic violence, sexual assault, trauma.”

The lack of representation and exclusion of people like themselves from the public policy process were significant for a number of women. One explained it this way:

"Watching the political folks, the folks in elected office and appointed office, take advantage of the community – and not include them in processes that were going to affect them for years to come – is what drove me to run for office."

For several women, stepping up to run for office was connected to a strong sense of obligation to helping others – particularly those most in need. As one state legislator remarked:

"We have to be responsible in terms of saying we're going step up and speak for those who don't have a voice or who's not going to be able to do it on their own... This is about service. We're serving the poor. We're serving the working people. We're serving the people of color that are struggling each and every day."

For one woman elected on the municipal level, the enduring commit-

ment to community and focus on providing a voice that was missing meant not considering higher office. She explained that some individuals want to get elected as a way to elevate themselves personally and advance professionally. But she said that was not her reason: "I was never looking at that. I just wanted to be a voice." The ward she eventually represented had been neglected and she wanted to make a difference by running.

All of these women aspired to seek change through public service. Over and over they spoke of their commitment to representing the underserved and voiceless and working on behalf of poor and neglected communities. They were most often compelled to run due to their deep convictions and enduring commitment to community and it was their strong ties to people in their communities as well as other networks who organized around them that led them to success at the polls.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN: What Works

Mentors: Experience Counts

When asked about the role of mentors over the course of their careers, many women characterized mentors as informal role models who came from different parts of their lives. As one woman put it:

"[There were] mentors in my church, in my family, in the community, my parents, and my family, and hundreds of friends. They've always supported me and given me guidance, even when they didn't know it."

Another woman noted:

"Mentors come in different forms and it's not just women, but it's men. [Having] a role model could be just watching someone, too, watching someone and saying 'wow you know what, I like that style.' I'm going to try to emulate that style and say, wow, how do I take that piece and turn it into something that fits you."

Whether mentors were people they knew personally, or only knew by reputation, most women were clear that mentors played a significant role during their journeys to office and while in office. In defining what a mentor does, one woman explained that mentors are "people who have opened doors and paths and who have gone through what you are about to go through." Several women talked about mentors as having knowledge of the political process and of "actual politics." Trust and honesty were identified as important elements of mentorship and, as one woman stated, you need people "who will tell you when you're doing it right and also tell you when you're doing it wrong."

However, mentors do not have to be older or very experienced. One woman suggested that "even young women who are doing this should think of themselves as mentors as well." She spoke about her personal commitment to serving as a mentor to others: "I try to always think about not just benefiting from advice, but trying to give back also."

The role of mentors was significant for many women interviewed and those who did not have a mentor early on commented that this absence was an initial impediment. One woman reflected on her lack of a mentor:

"[It] has always been, I think, a weakness, a lack... But it was hard for me to find people along the way. I mean I eventually did. But in terms of the political route, not so much, just simply because there weren't a lot of people doing that, and it was very much a good old boy network."

Her comments point to the reality that, as one of the first women of color to be elected in her community, she did not necessarily feel that there were individuals who could serve as mentors – at least not initially.

Family and Friends: Essential Ingredients and Supports

A majority of women interviewed were quick to identify the key role played by life partners and family members. According to a woman elected to the legislature, one's choice of life partner or spouse is "very, very important because the person... is going to play a critical role [in a successful campaign and as an elected official]." Beyond partners and family members, many women said they had a strong cadre of individuals and friends who served as the "small, committed team" that characterized the foundation of their campaigns and the support system that not only helped to launch electoral bids but also served as a sustaining force for years to come. One woman described her support team this way:

"... a collection of people. They just said 'okay, I'm in it with you' and they've been with me for 20-some years, a couple of them. So I was really relying on the people who I had worked with on the ward committee so I had that political base and then my very close friends who came and helped me out."

Another described her support team as, "a kitchen cabinet, a group of family, not just family...but also friends who believe in you...to help you with your policy."

When asked how these individuals helped build a successful campaign, one woman explained:

"The friendships I had were everything. So I started off with working with the 20 people that I knew and I was grateful that they supported me 100%. They were all in. They were on the phone. They were going door-to-door with me. They were volunteering at the office. Holding signs. They were introducing me to people and defending me in public. I mean, I don't think I could have done it without this strong group of friends."

Building a Grassroots Campaign and Network

Women's reflections on their bids for office often emphasized the grassroots nature of their campaigns and the need to forge ahead and build a network of supporters who were not on board at the outset. Several

women developed their campaigns directly out of their ties to community organizations they may or may not have been involved in before the campaign. As one woman recalled:

"I didn't have a lot of initial help during the primary. It was more of a grassroots trial and error [process]. I didn't know if I was following the playbook to win, or not. I was just trying to utilize my connections with the community and the work that I'd done in the community, tapping into those groups that I knew would be supportive of me and that's how I won in the primary."

On the other hand, some women noted that grassroots support is not enough in and of itself. For one woman it was important to "...seek support from people who have influence." Another woman commented on the value of support from established leaders, especially when you have not run before. She said, "As I was new, the more that you can get other people to vouch for you, [the] more quickly you build up name recognition."

Involvement with nonprofit groups, faith-based institutions and unions – and leadership roles in these organizations – served several functions for women seeking elective office. It allowed them to build networks of potential supporters, deepen their knowledge on key issues, and broaden the base of their campaign. One woman explained how important it was to have served on boards and be connected to organizations.

"I spent a great deal of time sitting on a variety of boards, charitable organizations...and as a result I had a very large network of people simply

because I had sat on all of those different boards. I was involved with a lot of charity work. That made it much easier for me because I knew a lot of people. I knew a lot of the services. I knew a lot of what needed to be done, what the issues of the day were because I was well-connected from that perspective. I think that was certainly critical to my ability...to marshal the troops as much as I could. And it gave me that breadth of information that I might not otherwise have had."

Sometimes female candidates had not been board members of organizations, but began to take public roles as active parents involved in the lives of their children and their children's schools, and this led over time to other forms of leadership. As one woman remarked:

"I was a swim team mom. I was a coordinator for the bake sale. Those types of positions are really, really important to building relationships. So as I gained confidence in the organization and the grassroots...and the networking that comes with all of that, that's how I was able to move forward."

In sum, there are multiple paths to becoming an elected official, but also some common elements. Many of the women profiled here had strong ties to their families, friends, and faith-based institutions, and they saw their volunteer work as legitimate preparation for elective office. Women who were elected to office believed in themselves – as well as their own skills and networks – and achieved electoral success through their own hard work and dedication.

HARD LESSONS FROM THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL: Barriers Faced by Women of Color

Women were candid about the challenges and obstacles they faced in their bids for office. Some women were clear that the barriers they experienced were not due solely to their being women of color from diverse racial and ethnic communities, but also due to their gender and, in some cases, their immigrant background. Many women commented on the way these multiple identities combined to make running for and winning office more challenging. As one woman put it:

"Running for office takes a lot of time. It's not an easy pathway for women of color or for men of color... We have to learn how it works. We have to learn who to go to. We have to learn where the network is and build a network. It's hard."

Women explained that the terms of office – and an election cycle that requires a run for office every two years – meant that campaigns took a lot of time and could detract from the capacity to get the work done in office as intended, and as needed for reelection.

The time commitment involved in being a candidate and then serving in office was tremendous, especially given that many women had children and families they cared for while they were engaged in advocacy and activism in their communities. This sentiment was captured by one of the first Latinas elected to office in Massachusetts:

"Every two years, you're...running for office. The amount of work that you can do gets limited because you have a family. Take me for instance. I had a family. I had three kids. When I ran for office, I was working full time. I was a full-time activist in the community and I was running a campaign."

The power of privilege, and what is often called the "old boys network,"

were frequently cited as barriers in the women's reflections on their entrée into politics. As one woman stated: "There's no old boys network for women." One woman noted the commonly held assumption that, "In order for you to run for office, you have to have this big old resume of political background or family history to be in office, and it's not necessarily so."

Women of color who were elected to office often cited overt racism and direct discrimination as major challenges, and this was particularly the case for women who ran in the 1970s and 1980s. A woman who first ran in the late 1980s recalled, "When I went to run for school committee, I remember being asked: Why would I want to do that? Why do you want to get into politics?" Another woman elected at the municipal level remarked:

"[There was] still a lot of blatant discrimination and racism. I was so surprised because here we are in the '90s, late '90s and maybe even 2000 and here are these people who still hold on to these very racist beliefs. So it was very difficult."

Other women noted more subtle and unconscious bias that affected their experience of running for office. One stated, "I think there's a lot of very subtle, not necessarily prejudice...but very subtle uncomfortableness with different races." Another woman offered:

"Stereotyping, unconscious bias, feeling misunderstood. I don't know that any of that is unique. I don't think these are outliers. I think these are challenges that people experience in any profession, but especially one that is widely male-dominated [like politics]."

One recently elected woman discussed the need to challenge both per-

sonal and societal perceptions about being accepted and supported by the public. She remarked that:

“The mass media, or the lack of faces like ours, makes it harder for us to envision ourselves in these positions, but we really need to try to overcome that. I really believe that the electorate is much more accepting than we believe that they are. The biggest challenge is really overcoming our own perceptions.”

Several women recalled that being a woman with a diverse racial or ethnic heritage meant that they were treated differently from other candidates. In some cases this meant being ignored and in other cases it meant heightened or special attention from media outlets. As one woman commented:

“It was different with the media because for me, I was a bit of a media darling and I say that simply because there was something odd about my being a candidate. There is a Black female face in a sea of white men running for office. So they want to have a conversation with you.”

Some women discussed how their run for office was not perceived positively due to cultural beliefs and expectations from their own ethnic or racial communities. A woman who served on the city council in an ethnically and racially diverse city said, “There are some men who...were very supportive, but that’s not always easy because...where people are still first generation or just coming and immigrating, there is still some belief about the male figure.” One woman spoke about how the diversity of Latino communities and the political ties to their native countries translated into a challenging political environment for her:

“When you look at the Latino community, for example, there are so many different ethnic groups and not all of them get along, because of politics back in their own country. So when they come here, they hold on to those politics. And discrimination is even within your own group, so it’s important to realize that you need the people that are already in your network to help you reach those people who won’t open their doors.”

One woman acknowledged that the experience of Latinos is also a reality for the many diverse Asian American communities with voters coming from countries such as China, Japan, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Her conclusion is that candidates and campaigns must educate underrepresented communities to understand the importance of being involved in the political process in order to get their needs and voices heard.

Many women who were successful in getting elected said they had to consciously work to avoid racism affecting them or their campaigns. One woman explained the importance of staying focused and not allowing such bias and discrimination to get in the way of her work on the trail:

“Clearly I was the only woman. I was obviously the only woman of color. At that point, you don’t know why people like or don’t like you, what may rub someone the wrong way. So my reality was I just didn’t care. It wasn’t about being Black, it wasn’t about being a female. It was about being a candidate and winning and I focused on that. There’s no doubt that there was sexism and racism at play. But I could not focus on that.”

Finances: Ensuring Personal Economic Security and the Challenges of Fundraising

When asked about the barriers faced as a political candidate, most women were quick to point to the financial component of an electoral bid and, in some cases, staying in a public servant position with a limited salary – if any – were often the most challenging aspects for them. In considering

a run for office, many women had to figure out how to ensure that they could meet their living and other expenses while they were candidates for office – which sometimes meant not being employed in order to run.

One woman discussed the risk involved in becoming a candidate and not working in order to do so:

“If you don’t necessarily have family support or other family, you’re living off your savings. It’s definitely a big risk...And you’re fundraising for your campaign, you’re not fundraising for your living expenses. That was a bigger challenge for me... to make sure that I had enough money to pay my bills.”

Given that so many women serve in primary caregiving roles and that many women are the primary breadwinners in their families, the financial demands of a campaign can take a significant toll. This clearly impacts women of color, as indicated by one woman:

“Because women are disproportionately the primary caregivers for the elderly people in the family, because women are increasingly sole heads of household, all these things limit our ability to run and then you don’t have policies and a political culture to support you doing those things.”

Another woman raised the issue of the long-term financial impact of choosing to be an elected official. She said that it was “more difficult actually after being in elected office to find paid work.” She explained that there wasn’t “a salary like Boston. ... you get a stipend, but it’s not sufficient for you...You need to have your own paid job in order to support yourself and your family.”

Women were also candid about how hard fundraising was for them. As one individual said: “Having people part with their money is probably the hardest thing that anybody will ever do ever.” It can be particularly challenging for women of color to fundraise given that many of their communities and constituents are low-income and, additionally, campaign fundraising may not be understood as important or necessary. As one woman stated, “We’re from communities where we really can’t always garner most of our contributions from our neighborhoods.” This sentiment was elaborated by a legislator who explained that many people in their community do not understand why money is always needed:

“People will say ‘you’re not running this year.’ They won’t understand that it’s important if we want to send out mailings or all that, to get money in between our elections...people don’t understand how important it is to have African-American women in positions of power and they have no conception of what it takes to get here. They have no conception of how much money it takes to be in office, to get in office, and to stay in office.”

One long-term local elected official explained that even though women find it difficult to fundraise for themselves, it’s important to understand that raising money for other causes is comparable and the skill set is similar:

“We’ll ask for others but we won’t ask for ourselves and getting past that. So my advice would be realize it’s hard, not to be daunted if you’re not successful the first time, not to be afraid to ask, and believe we already have the requisite skills. It’s just seeing how they cross over. If you can fundraise for your child’s soccer team, you can fundraise for yourself. If you can fundraise for the PTO, you can fundraise for yourself.”

Another woman stated that people have to be convinced of the value of contributing. She recalled, “It took me a while to get to a point where I can make it bigger than me in a campaign. Like this is about an investment in policy. This is about the actualization of our shared values and

our vision.” One state legislator discussed the pressing need to have supportive women who can be depended upon for generating the necessary funds to support women of color elected:

“We have to be able to cultivate women in terms of the importance of fundraising. I can tell you, it is different. It is different where we haven’t quite grasped that piece yet. But there are women who could raise that money, who are on the team...the goal is how can we cultivate women who you can call, who’s going to raise \$20,000? Not just talk about it, but say ‘I got you.’”

There was strong consensus among the women interviewed that fundraising is a key piece of a successful electoral bid. However, they also

SERVING AND STAYING IN OFFICE: Effectiveness and Sustainability

While women discussed myriad challenges associated with running for office, their experiences serving in office revealed how difficult it can be as an elected official. A few women thought that being a public official entailed even more challenge and work than the campaign. As one woman stated, “Running for public office, that’s the easy part. Serving, governing, serving is the hard part.”

In order to succeed as an elected official, some women believed it was necessary to work harder than their white male counterparts. According to one woman, “Once you’re in elected office, proving yourself is a greater challenge...[you have to] work twice as hard to be on top of your game.” The responsibilities and demands of serving as an elected leader are great. As a former state legislator remarked:

“I don’t want to say it is a piece of cake to campaign. It’s still hard. It’s hard to do that work. But the harder work and the work that you really have to dedicate yourself for the long haul is once you win, what kind of leader do you want to be? You’ve now become a public person. People are going to call you. Are you going to return their calls? Are you going to be available? Are you going to go to events?”

Another woman elected at the city level commented, “It is very, very hard to stay in this. It has everything from dealing with media and carving out a path for yourself as an elected official to continuing to maintain relationships and how to balance work and life. Now you have to do ev-

BUILDING THE POLITICAL PIPELINE: The Power of Community Networks and Mentors

What will it take to build and strengthen a political pipeline to ensure greater representation by women of color and women from diverse and/or underrepresented communities across Massachusetts?

Women already elected offered thoughtful suggestions about the range of activities needed to encourage, support, and advance a new generation of women of color leaders willing to pursue elected positions at all levels of government. A number of women were clear about their commitment to making sure that other women – particularly women of color – became elected leaders. As one woman stated, “I want to kick the door open and hold it open for more women to come through.”

Several women remarked that younger women need encouragement, education, and support to see themselves as leaders and to have the knowledge and training required to enter politics:

stressed that fundraising is a set of skills that can be learned and that women who have not tried to do this before should not shy away from running because they are still learning. It is widely known that money and politics are inextricably linked, but one of the advantages of starting at the local level – which many of these women did – is that success in fundraising can be coupled with family support, community support, mentoring, and endorsements from recognized leaders, to yield a successful campaign outcome even if the candidate is not an experienced fundraiser. The message that came through many of the interviews can be summed up by the following two points: first, learn to ask for money because it is not a personal ask; and second, it is a social investment in serving people and issues that have long been neglected.

erything that you did when you were campaigning but with a full-time job of being in office...”

One woman cited the low level of support, resources, and guidance that comes once elected to office. As she explained, “There are a lot of organizations focused on electing women and, once you’re in, if you want to get certain policies through, there’s much less support in terms of how to be a good elected official.” Some women identified a need for a support team once elected; one spoke about surrounding herself with individuals who could advise her upon her election to state legislature: “I established an advisory committee and the advisory committee was filled with people who acted as mentors to me, helping me, talking to me, supporting me so that I could be successful.”

Documenting the legislation and ordinances these women introduced and/or supported once elected is a worthy topic for another report and was not the focus of interviews for this guide. But we do know, in a general sense, that these women were often champions of quality K-12 education, of community supports for the underserved, safe learning environments for pre-school children, and eliminating violence in their cities and towns. They often advanced public policies to create more economic opportunity and security for all, especially for those living in poverty. Their motivation to run for elective office – their desire to serve those often overlooked – is reflected in their public policy record.

“Education is everything. How we start educating our young women to begin with, that we make sure that they have a sense of the rightness of their potential for leadership, that we’re always attempting to train women or educate women on the rightness of their ability to be in politics and the notion that they should be, that we should all be leaders.”

One woman identified the need to better understand what it is that keeps more women in general – and young women of color in particular – from running for office. As she explained, “There’s still something that keeps women from jumping in. I think it’s different for every generation of women. I don’t think it’s the same issue for me who grew up here in this country than for someone who just got here when they were a college-age kid. And if we can uncover those mysteries, we’d learn a lot.” Another woman reflected that she would like to see that “a youth-in-gov-

ernment type of experience replicated so that we really have the diversity and we have people who feel confident enough to run for office and that are able to have the resources that they need to get into these positions.”

A point that was made repeatedly is the need for women themselves to recognize that they can run for office and be strong and competent public leaders. One legislator remarked on the importance of self confidence:

“We have to be better in terms of recognizing that we are capable. No doubt. Of course we could run for office. Of course we could manage the city, manage the state or whatever. And of course we could run companies in terms of the private sector. It’s very important. I wouldn’t say it’s a lack of confidence. It’s just that you don’t think of it.”

Another local elected official spoke of the need to seize opportunities when they arise and the danger of not moving quickly and boldly: “I think what happens with women, and women of color in particular, we have to think about it too long. We have to get better at encouraging our sisters to think about it in a more concrete way so that when the opportunities present themselves, they’re ready to seize them.”

Several women referred to the importance of being involved in one’s community, taking on leadership roles, and understanding that the skill set gained through these experiences are relevant and transferable to politics. As one woman explained:

“I want to see women advance. I want to see diversity. I mostly want to see the best people moving into these positions. And to promote diversity and to promote women moving forward, they would have to be involved in their local communities and civic organizations...I can’t imagine a pipeline that doesn’t consist of community involvement. To me, the pipeline has to be encouraging women to get involved in their community and to be on the board and to put their hand up to be the chair and to take on more of those leadership positions because I don’t know how else you would have the experience to run for council. I think that’s ultimately where the pipeline would go, from civic organizations to local elected officials to the state level.... Go into the cultural organizations and encourage women to participate in positions of leadership.”

Another woman talked about the need for women to recognize that the skills they develop through their work in schools, churches, and community organizations are applicable to electoral politics and public service positions. She explained:

“Some of the work in church is so exhausting. Looking and running for office is equal, certainly not much less than that if you’re trying to get something done in your local church or at the school level. How do we get better at saying it’s the same skills? It’s the same skills and guess what, you’re actually impacting not only your own life and your family’s life but a bunch of other people that look like you, have the same issues as you, have the same feelings about the issues as you do.”

Understanding the demographics of different communities as well as the political landscape of particular communities was identified as an important component of increasing the numbers of women of color in office.

“We have so many communities that are extremely different. So what may work in one community won’t necessarily work in another community. And so we have to be mindful about the fact that demographics is key to understanding the nuances. A majority/minority community in politics is much different than a majority/majority community in politics... All politics are exceptionally local, so we have to be mindful of that.”

Furthermore, targeting candidates in certain districts is an important component of ensuring increased diversity in the legislature. As one woman stated:

“There are 20 state representative seats around the Commonwealth where the majority of the voting age population are people of color in that community. So how do you now focus and say who’s going to run for that seat? Are you prepared to do the work? Because that’s the other piece. We’re not entitled to anything... We are not entitled to anything. You got to work. It’s about outworking the [other] candidates, to win.... that means putting on your sneakers or putting on your boots and hitting the streets.”

A few women referred to institutional or structural barriers that exist in our current electoral process, such as the frequent election cycles, particularly for offices with two-year terms, and campaign financing. As one woman explained, “You’ve got to build a pipeline while you’re also changing the political electoral process. I think you’ve got to get terms to be longer. And you’ve got to get the financing under control.... there’s structural issues I think that remain.”

The need to be deliberate, strategic, and proactive was emphasized by several women who were clear that building the political pipeline would take work. As one city leader explained, “We need to advertise that there are political opportunities for women of color and we need to proactively reach out, find, mentor and in many cases convince people to run. Without a pipeline, I don’t think that’s going to happen organically.”

Some of the concrete suggestions involved identifying potential candidates and strategizing about succession planning. One woman explained that she wanted to see a more “active, defined process that is trying to identify potential slates of candidates for political office. That somebody somewhere is scouting the landscape.” Another believed that it was important to “challenge sitting elected women to have very honest conversations about succession planning.” Additionally, some women discussed the development of a guide or handbook for candidates and more organizational support and programming specifically designed for women of color.

Just as important as encouraging and supporting women of color candidates was building the capacity to work with women who run for office. As one woman explained:

“The pipeline needs to go beyond women that will run for office. Since women candidates are often considered unviable, who’s going to raise your money? Who’s going to write your field plan? Who knows how to do communications strategy? We need women and we need diverse women at every single level. It’s not just about who’s going to be the person on the dais in front of the podium and on the mic. But [it’s] the women behind the women...So we desperately need a pipeline.”

Beyond the need to expand the notion of the pipeline to ensure that there are women of color engaged in political work and trained to take on leadership roles in campaigns and the offices of elected officials, one woman clearly stated the need to expand those involved in building the pipeline:

“It’s about going to people that are in positions of power, mostly that are white men in the halls of government and in boardrooms and other places, and getting their buy in. We need their commitment, too. Do I think that we’ve got enough spirit and intellectual capital amongst women of color to develop this pipeline on our own? Of course! We hold up half the sky. I’m not questioning our ability. But if we want to bring about cultural institutional change, we do need other people to be a part of this.”

The moving folk ballad “Carry It On” became a favorite of the Civil Rights movement because its leaders and members knew about the stubborn persistence of discrimination and the need for continued efforts to eliminate it. This spirit is echoed in the words of the women profiled here. Their advice to aspiring women of color leaders is also a plea for their own struggles and victories to be carried on by the next generation. Their words speak more powerfully than our commentary, so we offer them here in a spirit of admiration for the work that has been accomplished in the past and our hope for the work that will be done in the future – work that will make our democracy more and more a reflection of its founding ideals.

Ann Bookman and Christa Kelleher

Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy

CARRY IT ON: Women of Courage and the Next Generation of Leaders

TAKE THE RISK

“You’ve got to take a gamble on yourself. I think that a lot of people think about going into political office and they talk themselves out of it. They say things like oh well I couldn’t do it, I couldn’t win, it would be a tough race, they might say mean things about me, all those things. And they may not decide to go forward.”

“I would advise that as soon as you know that you want to do it, I would advise running. I think we feel the pressure waiting because we think we need more qualifications. But I believe that people are qualified and that if you want to run, then you have an obligation to run. There’s a lot that you learn on the job. There’s a lot that you learn from the actual campaign. You’re there to represent people so that’s why it’s learning on the job... And I wouldn’t listen to all those inner voices that tell you that there’s a better time later because there’s never going to be a 100% right time. The more you do it, the better chance you have.”

EMBRACE PUBLIC SERVICE

“Check yourselves in terms of what your reasons are for wanting to do this. If it’s all about ego, it’s not going to work.”

“Don’t do it because you want to get power. This is not about power. This should be about serving and serving in any capacity.”

“Making the decision and believing in yourself that you can be good at it. But recognizing that you can’t do it yourself. I would say that it has to be for a reason. Like why are you running? For me, first making the decision to run and saying how can I make it better for folks?”

“It’s most important for people when they’re getting into office to think about why are you running, what is it that you want to do. If it’s to promote yourself or to promote something other than positive change, I don’t know that this is where you should be.”

“But the people that should go into government, I really believe that if you have the right people, meaning people who go in for other reasons than their own selfish benefit but are willing to work hard, to learn, to grow, to remember the people who have put them into their positions and to make sure that they’re staying in touch with that community so that they’re not just playing out their own agendas but they’re playing out an agenda that is one that’s informed by those who put them in office.”

PREPARE AND BE READY

“To not be afraid to get into the race. Don’t be nervous, don’t be scared. Make sure that you have confidence. Make sure that you are clear on your message. Make sure that it’s a developed idea. Make sure that you are prepared for really anything. Be prepared for questions. Go through interview prep. Make sure you know your issues in and out. Make sure that you can kind of crush your opponent nicely if you need to. And also just kind of remaining true to whoever you are. Granted, it is a competition but it doesn’t have to be cutthroat with other women. That’s the thing. We can all be in it together. There’s enough for everybody.”

“Having an impassioned story of your own that you can draw from, that pushes you as you are working to get elected. Once you get to a place like the House of Representatives and the Senate, it’s going to strengthen you, and it’s going to nurture you as you receive some of the most devastating hits that you might get from another human being.”

“Prepare for a lot of criticism. You have to be very confident in who you are because people will go after you for every little thing, whether it’s the way you look, the way you dress, particularly for women.”

“I think what women need is confidence, support, being ready to accept criticism, being quick on your feet, quicker than a man needs to be, and not afraid to just say however you feel.”

“Do your homework. Be prepared. There’s always someone wanting to make you look bad. You don’t know who that is. You don’t know when it’s coming. But be prepared.... Data is important.”

“How you react in public, when confronted. I think those are very critical. So whatever types of skills, learning sessions that can be provided for women, particularly women of color who want to run for office would be valuable.”

“Ask everything, even if you think you know it, especially when you’re starting out.”

“Meet with everybody. Don’t consider white males your enemy. White males in politics know how it works.”

“Anybody can do it. You just have to really be sure of why you want to do it and have the commitment to work hard at it.”

KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY AND BE INVOLVED

“Have a wide range of community experience and work under their belt before they even consider coming into the great and general court or in city government or anywhere in elected office in particular...they should know their community and the community needs. And they should be prepared to fight for them if they are planning on running for political office.”

“Learn as much as you can before you even decide to run. Get your education intact and your education should also include your relationships with other women, your relationship to women in your community and your relationship with the broader community. That’s men and women in general. Know your area. That’s the first thing.”

“Everyone lives in a community and lives in a neighborhood. And every month there are meetings happening. Show up to your neighborhood meetings.... it gets tough if you’re not known, if you’re not known in the neighborhood where you want to represent.”

“I encourage people to get involved in civic organizations, church groups, to surround yourself with people that are like minded, that will be a part of your team, because there’s no way you can get elected on your own. You have to have people around you.”

MOBILIZE YOUR SUPPORTS

“You’ve got to have, aside from a tough skin and hard work, you’ve got to sort of think about who’s going be that emotional support for you. So I would say that that’s something to think about if you’re going into politics. Don’t discount yourself. Don’t shut yourself out of it before you even get into it. Instead just do an inventory. What are you afraid of? What are the things you don’t know?”

TRY AGAIN

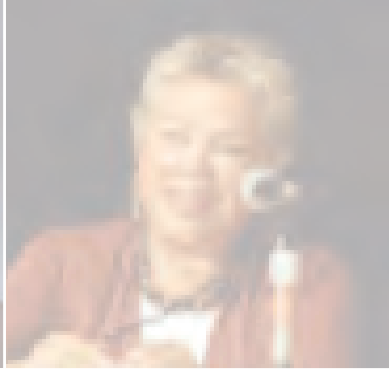
“At first you don’t succeed, try, try again. Don’t be discouraged if you don’t win the first time. It’s not easy. It’s very good work but it’s very hard work. It takes a toll on you, it takes a toll on your family. But if you pace yourself, you put together your political life, if you will, you can make it doable. It’s like any other job, but you really do have to pace yourself.”

TELL YOUR STORY, BE TRUE, BE YOURSELF

“Stories are important. Don’t be afraid to tell your story and tell other people’s stories as an advocate, as a political person serving in office. Stories convince people. Stories give life to the issues and your causes. And storytelling is very important and women do it well, but they have to position themselves to feel comfortable telling the stories.”

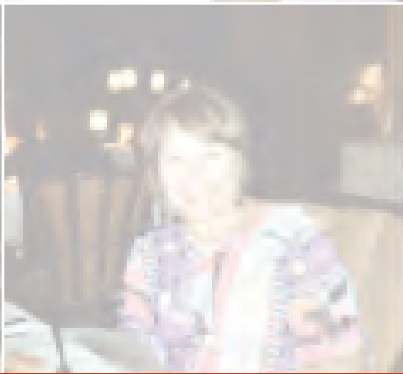
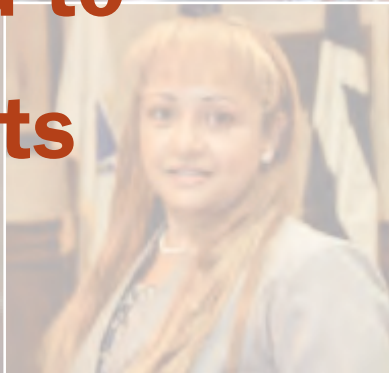
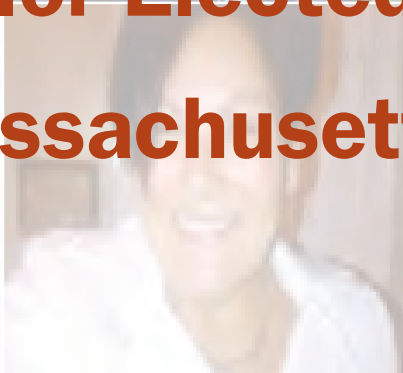
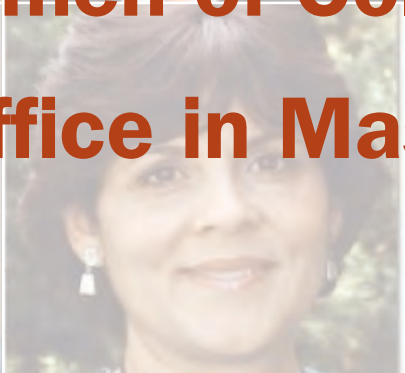
“I would encourage them to walk in your truth. Be authentically you. Stand in that truth and operate with a strength of conviction.”

“Don’t run away from being a woman and don’t run away from being you, whatever that is, because you’re afraid of being pigeonholed or stereotyped or being the Latina at the table that always brings up Latinas. What did you run for? That doesn’t have to be all you do. But I do hope that there will be some compelling, some moral imperative to represent that when no one else does.”



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Women of Color Elected to Office in Massachusetts



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JANET ADACHI

Board of Selectmen, Town of Acton

2010-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Japanese American



Public Service Highlights

Janet Adachi was first elected to the Acton Board of Selectmen in 2010 and she served as Clerk in 2011 and 2012 and Vice Chairman from 2012-2013. She was re-elected in 2013 and served as Chairman from 2013-2014. Selectwoman Adachi currently serves as Clerk.

She is the Board of Selectmen Liaison to the following municipal committees and other public entities serving the Town of Acton: Acton-Boxborough Cultural Council; Acton Community Housing Corporation; Acton Water Supply District; Conservation Commission; Design Review Board; Finance Committee; Land Stewardship Committee; Minuteman Regional Technical School District; Water Resources Advisory Committee, and the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Public Sector Member, 495/Metrowest Partnership Board of Directors

Board of Selectmen Member, Acton Community Preservation Committee

Conservation Commission Member, Acton Community Preservation Committee

Member, Acton Conservation Commission

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Acton and Boxborough Diversity Coalition

Educational Background

JD, Boston College School of Law

AB, Harvard University (Radcliffe College)

Current Position

Non-practicing attorney; Member in Good Standing (MA and NY Bars, inactive status)

In Her Own Words

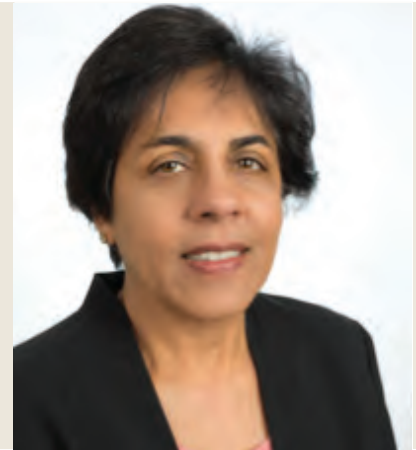
“As the first non-Caucasian to serve on the Acton Board of Selectmen, I am fortunate to have been able to use my skills and energy to assist the Town in resolving vexing issues, making important decisions and moving forward. Although my experience on the Board has in many respects been indistinguishable from that of my colleagues, I am aware that for some people, my choices as a Selectman will reflect fairly or not on other Asians in the community or beyond. For that reason, I follow some informal guidelines to assure that my actions are reasonable, even if people disagree with them. For example, representing the interests of all residents, and not just “squeaky wheels”; being well-informed; being civil and professional; and taking the work, but not myself, seriously. A healthy sense of humor and a “thick skin,” both of which I luckily possess in abundance, are invaluable tools for survival as a public official!”

RITA S. ADVANI

School Committee, Town of Norfolk

1996-1999

Racial/Ethnic Background: Asian Indian/South Asian



Public Service Highlights

While serving on the Norfolk School Committee, Rita Advani set policy and budgets that met goals for improvements in education, hired the Superintendent of Schools, advocated for and built a new school and the addition to a school building. She also negotiated teacher labor contracts, advocated for school budgets and capital expenditures at Town Meeting and with Town Selectmen, officers, boards and committees.

While serving as Chair of the Norfolk Energy Committee, an additional accomplishment included bringing a new solar power project to Norfolk. This allowed the Town to substantially reduce the amount of money it previously spent on the electricity needed to power its municipal buildings.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Foundation Budget Review Commission, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Founder Member, Parent Advisory Board, Norfolk School Age Child Care Program

Board Member, Norfolk Teacher Parent Association

Chair, Norfolk Energy Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Board of Directors, VNA Care Network and Hospice Foundation Board

Educational Background

BA, University of Delhi, India

MBA, Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata, India

Current Position

President, Bush Pond Ventures; Director, Regional Programming, High Touch High Tech of New England

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“There are 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts with dozens of boards and committees that could take advantage of your professional expertise, communit engagement and passion to make your community a better place to live for you, your family, and your neighbors. Get engaged, volunteer, get to know the political process, and get ready to serve!”

WILLIE MAE ALLEN

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 6th Suffolk

2007-2011

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black



Public Service Highlights

A longtime resident of Mattapan, Willie Mae Allen made improving education one of her top priorities while in office. She worked successfully to increase funding for the elderly, education, public safety, violence prevention, and housing. She also worked on job creation and keeping discrimination out of the Constitution. She served as Chair of the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus and was on the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators. She also authored the Willie Allen Amendment to ensure minority representation at Massachusetts Democratic State Conventions..

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

- Joint Committee on Elder Affairs
- Joint Committee on Election Laws
- Joint Committee on Financial Services
- Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development
- Member, Massachusetts Democratic State Committee
- Member, Executive Board, Massachusetts Women's Legislative Caucus

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

- Leader, Prince Hall Grand Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star
- Morning Star Baptist Church
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- Massachusetts Democratic State Committee
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority
- Mattapan Civic Improvement Association

Educational Background

- MA, Public Administration, Suffolk University
- BA, Business Administration, Suffolk University

Retired

Electoral Significance

Willie Mae Allen has been honored by many organizations for her contributions to the Boston community and to the Commonwealth.

Awards include: 350 Blacks Who Have Made a Difference in Massachusetts Black History, Prince Hall Freemasonry Community Leadership Award, NAACP Community Service Award and recognition from the Massachusetts Democratic State Committee, Mattapan Civic Improvement Association, Exodus Outreach Recovery Program, METCO, AIDS Action Committee, Boston Central Elder Services, NARAL, Mattapan CDC, and Codman Square NDC.

NILKA ALVAREZ-RODRIGUEZ

City Council, City of Lawrence At-Large

2006-2010; 2014-2015

District C

2000-2005

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican American



Public Service Highlights

Elected Vice President of the City Council by fellow council members, Nilka Alvarez-Rodriguez developed the women's agenda to focus on women's issues each year. Among her many initiatives, she brought a multimillion federal program, Lawrence Weed & Seed, to weed out crime and plant the seed for socioeconomic revitalization in the most distressed area of Lawrence. She also initiated the Lawrence Teen City Council, established policy for the disposition of public land and declared a foreclosure watch zone.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Program Director, Executive Office of Health & Human Services, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Chair, Housing Committee, City of Lawrence

Board Member, Ordinance Committee, City of Lawrence

Committee Member, Department of Criminal Justice Prevention & Intervention Project

Board Member, New York State Executive Office of the Women's Division

Commissioner, Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Organizing Committee Member, Annual Women & Policy Symposiums, Women's Agenda

Committee Member, NYC Latino Voting Rights

Founder and Board Member, Lawrence Weed & Seed Coalition

Educational Background

DA, Rochville University

MA, SUNY Empire State

BA, The College for Human Services

Current Position

Adjunct Faculty, Merrimack College

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Volunteer as much as you can in organizations or committees addressing the issues you care about and find a mentor or mentors who have played a role in facing the barriers and challenges you want to overcome.”

KATHLEEN ANDERSON

School Committee, Town of Amherst

2010-2011



Public Service Highlights

Kathleen Anderson is an advocate of diversity and education in the town of Amherst. After serving on the town's School Committee, she continued her call to public service. Currently she serves as both a member of the Amherst Planning Board, and as Commissioner of the Amherst Human Rights Commission. Her community involvement has included coordinator of the Parent Involvement Project, co-founder, facilitator and facilitator trainer of Amherst Community Study Circles dialogues on race and class, executive board member of the international organization, Training for Change, Amherst Schools Becoming A Multicultural School System (BAMSS) committee member, Amherst Regional High School (ARHS) Diversity Leadership team member, ARHS organizer/leader for the South African student exchange program, ARHS Parent Center Board member, Race Discipline Action & Rights (RaDAR) committee member and First Day committee member.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Amherst Planning Board

Commissioner, Amherst Human Rights Commission

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

President, Amherst NAACP

Member, Black Art in America

Coordinator, Parent Involvement Project

Committee Member, Becoming a Multicultural School System

Committee Member, ARHS Diversity Leadership

Current Position

Freelance Educator

In Her Own Words

“As a fiftieth generation on these lands I have extensive experience as an only person of color in a range of learning and corporate organizations. I come to the table with a history steeped in an understanding of the nuances involved in developing community that works for a diverse population.”

ONEIDA AQUINO

City Council, City of Lawrence District D

2010-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Oneida Aquino first sought a seat on the Lawrence City Council in 2009 and was victorious over a long-term incumbent. She prioritized weaknesses in the management of the city budget and serves as Vice Chair of the Budget & Finance Committee.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice Chair, Budget & Finance Committee

Vice Chair, Personnel Committee

Member, Public Safety Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Former Board Member, Hispanic Week

Educational Background

Business Administration, Cambridge College

Current Position

Owner, D'Todo

In Her Own Words

“We’re knocking door to door getting to know people, and getting them to know me...I’m working 100% for my district...I want the people to know that, and be confident of their votes.”

SHAYNAH MARIE BARNES

City Council, City of Brockton At-Large

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

In 2013, Shaynah Barnes became the first Black woman elected to the Brockton City Council. Although Councilor Barnes has been in office for a short time, she has made significant achievements. Some of her initial accomplishments include the creation of the city's first community dog park. She has also proposed a government study group as well as a mobile City Hall Unit.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Committee Member, Accounts; Community Schools; Finance (City of Brockton)

Adolescent Assessment Social Worker/Juvenile Court Liaison, Massachusetts Department of Children and Families

Victim Witness Advocate, Massachusetts Department of Youth Services

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, United Way of Greater Plymouth County

Board Member, Family and Community Services

Board Member, Brockton Day Nursery

Board Member, Old Colony YMCA

Voting Delegate, Massachusetts Democratic Caucus

Educational Background

Post-graduate coursework, Justice Administration, Northeastern University

BS, Criminal Justice, Northeastern University

Current Position

Senior District Representative, U.S. Congressman Stephen F. Lynch

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

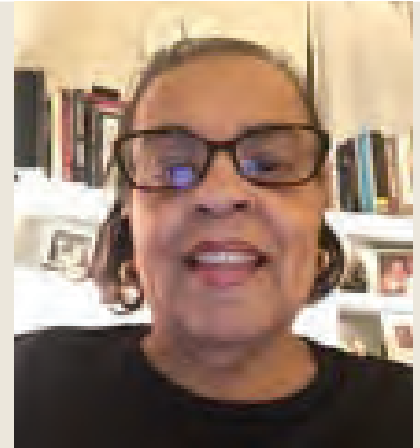
“Don't feel threatened by another running. Run your own race. Leave that personal stuff at the door.”

DORIS BUNTE

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 7th Suffolk

1973-1985

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

The first African American woman elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, Doris Bunte began her career in Boston politics as a tenant activist at Orchard Park (now Orchard Gardens). She went on to become the first public housing tenant appointed to the Boston Housing Authority Board. Bunte was then elected as a State Representative for the 7th Suffolk District for seven straight terms, where she served as chairwoman of the Committee on Federal Financial Assistance, before being appointed as the Director of the Boston Housing Authority. She served in that position for eight years.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Director, Boston Housing Authority

Board Member, Boston Housing Authority

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Director of Community Relations, Center for the Study of Sport in Society

Director of Community Relations/Consultant, Boston University

Member, Urban Outreach Council, Northeastern University

Educational Background

MA, Harvard University

Certificate of Advanced Environmental Studies, Harvard University

Current Position

Independent Management Consultant Professional

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“I think that you have to go there with the understanding that while you may be a freshman, you’re the same as all the rest of the freshmen. You don’t single yourself out. Be included, inclusive. You want to know everything. You want to be in all of the places where the information is. You want to learn the rules that go with whatever chamber you’re in, whether you’re a city councilor or a representative. Whatever it is that you are, it’s important to learn the rules because it’s those rules that govern the branch that you sit in.”

ANDREA CABRAL

Sheriff, Suffolk County, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

2004-2013

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black American, Cape Verdean, Native American



Public Service Highlights

Andrea Cabral was the first woman to be elected Sheriff in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. She was first appointed to the position of Sheriff in 2004, elected in 2004 and re-elected in 2010. In 2013, she was appointed Secretary of Public Safety by Governor Deval Patrick and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Parole Board among other agencies in the secretariat, including the State Police, the National Guard, and the State Department of Correction.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

- Department of Justice Science Advisory Board
- Assistant District Attorney, Middlesex County District Attorney's Office
- Assistant Attorney General
- Chief of the Domestic Violence Unit
- Chief of District Courts in the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

- Member, Massachusetts Mentoring Partnership Board
- Advisory Board of the Rappaport Center for Law and Public Policy
- Editorial Board of Mass Lawyer's Weekly
- Governing Board of the Mass Mentoring Partnership.

Educational Background

- JD, Suffolk University Law School
- BA, Boston College

Current Position

- Speaking Session, Boston Public Radio on WGBH

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“When considering whether to run for political office, women candidates should always believe and invest in themselves and what they know they are capable of achieving, rather than seeing their potential through the eyes of others and being dissuaded by the negative voices.”

JENNYFER MORINA CABRAL

School Committee, City of Malden

2012-2013

Racial/Ethnic Background: Hispanic



Public Service Highlights

Elected in 2011, Jennyfer Morina Cabral was active on many committees as a member of the Malden School Committee.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, District Enrollment and Capacity Committee

Member, Negotiations-Paraprofessionals Committee

Member, Public Facilities and Safety Committee

Member, Superintendent Evaluation Committee

Member, Technology & Student Services Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, YMCA Malden

Member, Planning Committee, Latino Festival, 2015

Candidate, Teen Enrichment Center

Educational Background

BS, Business Management, Cambridge College

Current Position

Business Management Specialist, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Electoral Significance

Jennyfer Cabral was the second woman of color elected to the Malden School Committee.

CECILIA P. CALABRESE

City Council, City of Agawam

2004-2009; 2012-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Mixed-race



Public Service Highlights

Currently in her fifth term on the Agawam City Council, Cecilia Calabrese's tenure in office has been marked by a commitment to fiscal conservatism and a passion for serving her community. As a City Councilor, Calabrese has been, and continues to be an outspoken critic of wasteful spending in the city's budget. In addition, she has fought to ensure that public employees, particularly teachers, police, and firefighters have the necessary skills and equipment needed to maximize their performance. Calabrese ran for Mayor of Agawam in 2009. She has practiced bankruptcy law, real estate law, and Trusts & Estates since 1990 and was an Associate Attorney with the law firm of Bacon/Wilson in Springfield, before operating her own practice for 15 years.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Community Relations Sub-Committee

Member, Finance Sub-Committee

Member, Budget Committee #1

Former Council Vice President

Former Member, Conservation Committee (Brookfield, CT)

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Agawam Republican Town Committee

Member, Board of Directors; Legal, Counsel, Agawam Robotics Education Association (in affiliation with FIRST Robotics)

Educational Background

JD, Quinnipiac University School of Law

BA, Biology, University of Bridgeport

AA, Dental Hygiene, Springfield Technical Community College

Current Position

Registered Dental Hygienist and Legal Counsel, Agawam Dental Arts;

Rental Property Manager, MICE, LLC

In Her Own Words

"I've always taken a critical eye toward the budget. It is my goal to maximize the value of tax dollars that are spent in town."

NAOMI R. A. CARNEY

City Council, City of New Bedford At-Large

2000-2001; 2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: American Indian and Cape Verdean



Public Service Highlights

Councilor-At-Large Naomi Carney has been an advocate for children, seniors, and schools, while also emphasizing economic development. She has also served in many leadership roles on behalf of the Aquinnah Wampanoag Tribe including the Tribal Council. As a member of the Wampanoag Tribe, she has worked on economic development, education, and the preservation of culture and tradition.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Appointments and Briefing Committee

Member, Environmental Affairs Committee

Member, Finance Committee

Member, Ordinances Meeting Committee

Member, Public Safety and Neighborhoods Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Council Member, Aquinnah Wampanoag Tribe

Chair, Aquinnah Wampanoag Tribe Economic Development Committee

Member, Aquinnah Wampanoag Tribe Constitution Committee

Chairperson, Aquinnah Gaming Commission

Board President, Greater New Bedford Boys & Girls Club

Educational Background

BA, Southeastern Massachusetts University (now UMass Dartmouth)

Current Position

Director, Inmate Community Work Program, Bristol County Sherriff's Office

In Her Own Words

“I am working hard for the citizens of New Bedford. I hope to get back to the “grass roots” of our community and to keep our streets safe!”

MARIA CARRASCO

City Council, City of Lynn

2008-2014

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Over the course of her four terms on the Lynn School Committee, Maria Carrasco made important contributions. She established a 15-minute open microphone forum that provided residents an opportunity to bring their concerns to the School Committee. Additionally, she facilitated the purchase of translating equipment by the school administration enabling many more parents to attend meetings and be a part of the process. Maria also brought the USA 2010 Census to schools so that students could educate their parents.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Trustee, North Shore Community College

Member, Negotiation Subcommittee

Member, Finance Committee

Member, Building and Grounds Committees

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

President, New Lynn Coalition

Board Member, Lynn School Committee

President, Lynn Hispanic Scholarship Fund

Member, Gregg House

Highland Coalition

Educational Background

BA, University of Autónoma of Santo Domingo

Associate's Degree, North Shore Community College

Current Position

Case Manager, North Shore Career Center

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Be yourself, honest, open and always focused on what you want for the community...”

SONIA CHANG-DÍAZ

State Senate, Massachusetts Legislature 2nd Suffolk

2009-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Multi-Ethnic



Public Service Highlights

Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz is the first Latina elected to the Massachusetts State Senate and is widely recognized as a strong advocate for public education, criminal justice reform, and access and opportunities for low-income and immigrant communities. She prioritizes sound fiscal reform and good stewardship of taxpayer dollars in her work as a State Senator.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Education

Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Bonding, Capital Expenditures, and State Assets

Member, Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Member, Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities

Member, Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security

Member, Senate Committees Steering and Policy, and Redistricting

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Senior Legislative Aide, State Senator Cheryl Jacques

Political Advisor, Barbara Lee Family Foundation

Director of Outreach, Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center

Teacher, Lynn and Boston Public Schools

Educational Background

BA, Political & Social Thought, University of Virginia

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Fear is okay. And so is failure. In my own life, the situations that scared me the most, or the situations where I stumbled, were often the situations where I learned the most—about the world and about myself. Take action even though it scares you—whether it’s running, volunteering for someone, or calling into a talk radio show to comment. Do it because it scares you. You and the world will be better for it.”

CLAUDIA CHUBER

City Council, City of Salem

2002-2003

School Committee, City of Salem

1998-2001

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Claudia Chuber was elected to the Salem School Committee in 1997, making her the first person of color ever elected to office in Salem. She then went on to serve as a City Councilor for one term.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Harbor Plan Implementation Committee

Honorary Co-Chair, CPA-Yes! Community Preservation Act, 2007 Campaign

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Commissioner, Essex National Heritage Area

Corporator, Beverly Bank

Member, Salem Rotary Club; Salem Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors; Destination Salem Board of Directors

Advisory Council Member, Salem State University Bertolon School of Business

Board President, Salem Harbor CDC

Member, Partners Health Care Corporation

Trustee, North Shore Physician's Group; North Shore Medical Center

Board Member, Salem Award Foundation

Trustee, North Shore Community College; House of the Seven Gables; Salem YMCA

Mentor, Initiative for Diversity in Civic Leadership

Educational Background

MBA, Salem State University

M.Ed, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Licenciatura, Lenguas Modernas-Educación, Universidad del Valle (CO)

Current Position

Director of Community Affairs and Grants Management, Peabody Essex Museum

Electoral Significance

Claudia Chuber was the first Latina elected to Salem's School Committee and City Council.

CHERYL COAKLEY-RIVERA

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 10th Hampden

1999-2014

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina, Puerto Rican



Public Service Highlights

As the first Hispanic woman elected to the Massachusetts Legislature, Cheryl Coakley-Rivera was a Co-Founder of the Latino Caucus (Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus). Her many accomplishments while in office included obtaining funds for Springfield and making it a safer place to live, securing funding for the police department's C3 program, increasing access to carbon monoxide detectors, and addressing animal cruelty issues.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development

Member, Joint Committee on Federal Stimulus Oversight

Chair, Joint Committee on Public Safety

Chair, Joint Committee of Homeland Security

Chair Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Hampden County Bar Association

Massachusetts Association of Hispanic Attorneys

Educational Background

JD, Western New England School of Law

BA, Northeastern University

Current Position

Assistant Clerk, Hampden County Superior Court Clerk's Office

In Her Own Words

"At the end of the day, policy is important. There are a lot of lives you can touch by picking up a phone."

LUCY CORCHADO

City Council, City of Salem Ward 1

2004-2007

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina/Puerto Rican



Public Service Highlights

Lucy Corchado, a community organizer and activist, won election to the Salem City Council and served two terms. Her active engagement in the city and leadership work have led to numerous awards, including the Salem State Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Award and Civic Engagement Hall of Fame Award, the North Shore CDC Change Agent Award, and the Salem Giving Tree Award as well as public citations recognizing her neighborhood activism.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

- Board Member, Affordable Housing Trust Fund, City of Salem
- Founding Member and Trustee, Salem Community Charter School
- Member, Harbor Plan Implementation Committee, City of Salem
- Member, Search Committee, New Chief of Police (Salem)

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

- President, Point Neighborhood Association
- Treasurer/Board Member, North Shore Community Health, Inc.
- No Place for Hate Committee, City of Salem
- Neighborhood Improvement Advisory Council, City of Salem
- Member, Community Advisory Board
- Latino Leadership Coalition

Educational Background

Associate's Degree, Marian Court College

Current Position

Staff Assistant, Student Life, Salem State University

In Her Own Words

“I think 11 white men on the council doesn't reflect the demographics that exist in Salem. It's an ever-growing, diverse community and I think the legislative body should reflect that. I was the only woman and Latina candidate, so I was hoping that would've been an added merit in my candidacy.”

MARTINA M. CRUZ

School Committee, City of Lawrence

2006-2011

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

During her three-term tenure as a School Committee member in Lawrence, Martina was known as the “independent parent’s voice.” She stood up for several causes, including advocating against inadequate policies and dishonest leaders and highlighting issues that affect the quality of school education. In addition to her work in her community, Martina has also been, and continues to be, a passionate supporter of helping women of color become leaders in their communities.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Financial Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Advisory Board Member, St. Mary’s Assumption Parish

Board Member, Women’s Institute for Leadership and Development

Educational Background

BA, Human Services, Springfield College

Associate Certificate, Child Development, Revere College

Current Position

Member, Women’s Solidarity Committee, Dominican Development Center

In Her Own Words

“Women in politics, we are not represented, women of color much less... but we bring our experience to the table that can change the decisions that take place... our voice is very important.”

DEBRA S. DAGWAN

Town Council, Town of Barnstable Precinct 8

2010-Present

School Committee, Town of Barnstable

2008-2009

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

As a first-time candidate for the Barnstable School Committee in 2002, Debra Dagwan received the highest vote in a town with a population of 49,000 residents. She became Vice-Chair of the School Committee before being elected to the Barnstable Town Council 2009. In 2013, she was voted President of the Town Council and was the first woman of color to be elected in that leadership position in the town's history. She was recognized by the Women's Pipeline for Change in 2013 for being the only woman of color elected official in the southeastern part of Massachusetts at that time.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Town Council Appointments Committee

Board Member, Cape Cod YMCA Young Achievers

Board Member, Hyannis Civic Association

Member, Cape Cod Branch of NAACP

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

Member, Barnstable Democratic Town Committee

Member, Cape Cod Women's Coalition

Member, Mashpee Baptist Church

Educational Background

PhD, Springfield College

MEd, Boston University

BS, University of Maryland

Current Position

Faculty Member, Bridgewater University

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Continued demonstration of commitment and dedication to community and appreciation for those who came before us that made the sacrifices which pave the way for me and for those of you who chose to follow in their footsteps to bring about a quality of life which is better for all of us. I would also recommend prayer. There is power in prayer, and I know I would not have made it without it.”

LINDA DORCENA FORRY

Senate, Massachusetts Legislature 1st Suffolk

2013-Present

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 12th Suffolk

2005-2013

Racial/Ethnic Background: Haitian American



Public Service Highlights

A first generation Haitian American, Senator Linda Dorcena Forry has dedicated her professional life to a career in public service, holding various positions in state and local government. Upon her election to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 2005, Forry became the second Haitian American to serve in public office in Massachusetts. She has championed improvements to the state's education system, job creation and business development efforts. She is committed to community development efforts across the state, access to high quality healthcare, housing affordability, effective public safety policies, the growth of emerging technologies and the preservation of the state's precious natural resources. Senator Forry also plays a leadership role on immigration issues.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Joint Committee on Housing

Chair, Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs

Joint Committees on Transportation; Health Care Financing; Education; Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Director, Department of Neighborhood Development, City of Boston

Legislative Aide/Acting Chief of Staff, Massachusetts Representative Charlotte Golar Richie

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Boys and Girls Clubs of Dorchester

Milton Library Foundation

Ward 13 and Ward 17 Democratic Committees

Boston Foundation Haiti Relief and Reconstruction Fund Advisory Council

Member, National Haitian American Elected Officials Network

Member, American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL)

Educational Background

MPA, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

BS, Carroll School of Management, Boston College

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Show up to your neighborhood meetings. Get to know your neighbors. Get to know your community and your neighborhood.”

VIRAPHANH (VIRA) DOUANGMANY CAGE

School Committee, Town of Amherst

2015-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Loatian American



Public Service Highlights

One of Vira's key priorities while in office is to ensure children have access to an excellent public education full of opportunities to explore being creators, leaders, dreamers, problem-solvers and visionaries. She supports an educational system that stands up for teachers to fully exercise their talent and skills to connect and make a difference in each child's life for their growth and their learning.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Co-Chair, School Equity Task Force

Executive Board Member, Collaborative for Educational Services (Amherst Representative)

Ex-officio Member, Amherst Town Meeting

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Representative, Regional School Committee, Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools

Co-Chair, Executive Board, Youth Action Coalition

Educational Background

BA, Sociology, University of Amherst

Current Affiliation

Western Massachusetts Field Coordinator, American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts

In Her Own Words

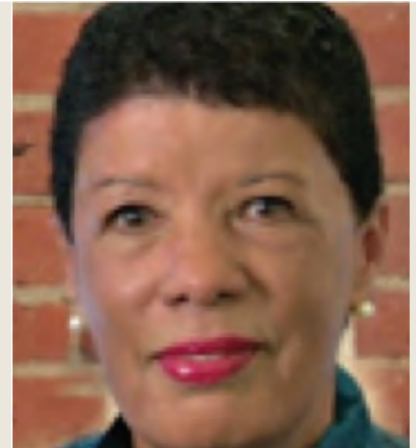
"I need to see more people who look like me and my children representing our interests and perspectives in elected positions. This is how we become politically empowered and valued as a community. That's why I do it."

JANE C. EDMONDS

School Committee, Town of Sharon

1972-1977

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Jane C. Edmonds was the first African-American woman elected to the Sharon School Committee amidst desegregation of the Boston Public Schools and the racial tensions of the late 1960s and early 1970s. She served as Chair of the School Committee during her second term. She was the first woman of color elected to school committee in Massachusetts and the founder, CEO, and President of a Boston-based business for over 20 years (Jane C. Edmonds & Associates, Inc.). She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus Abigail Adams Award.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Director, Office of Intergovernmental Relations, City of Boston

Director, Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development

Chair, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination

Vice-Chair and Member, State Board of Higher Education

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Facing History and Ourselves

Board Member, Lahey Clinic Foundation Board of Trustees

Board Member, Goodwill Morgan Memorial

Board Member, International Leadership Association

Educational Background

JD, Boston College Law School

BA, Social Relations, Harvard University

Current Position

Vice President for Governance/Clerk of the Corporation, Babson College

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Take a gamble of yourself. Step out of your comfort zone. Know that others have felt and surpassed the same fears. Just do it.”

RAMONA FOSTER

School Committee, City of Chelsea District 7

2008-2011

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina and African American



Public Service Highlights

Ramona Foster first ran for the Chelsea School Committee in 2007 and served two terms. She has worked as a teacher, coach, school administrator and been a volunteer in her community. She has received several awards including the Teacher of the Year Award from the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) and Phenomenal Woman Community Service Award by the Lewis Latimer Society. In 2011, she was inducted into Chelsea's High School Hall of Fame for her coaching accomplishments.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

- Member, Hyams Foundation Afterschool Initiative
- Member, Chelsea Kelly School Site Council
- Member, Lewis Latimer Society
- Appointed Member, Chelsea Community Schools
- Appointed, City of Chelsea Charter Renewal Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

- Co-head Coach, Girls Basketball, Boston Showstoppers – Girls – 5th, 9th and 10th grades
- Volunteer Coach, Merritting Attention Basketball Club – Boys and Girls -4th-8th grade
- Head Coach, Girls Basketball, Chelsea High School
- Assistant Women's Basketball Coach, Emmanuel College
- Head Women's Basketball Coach, North Shore Community College
- League Administrator, Chelsea Youth Basketball League

Educational Background

- Graduate Coursework, Special Education, University of Massachusetts Boston
- BS, Sociology, Emmanuel College

Current Position

- Education Specialist, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Head Women's Basketball Coach, Bunker Hill Community College

Electoral Significance

Ramona Foster first won election to the Chelsea School Committee as a write-in candidate and, in the 2009 election, was on the ballot.

GLORIA L. FOX

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 7th Suffolk

1985-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

The longest serving African American woman in the Massachusetts Legislature, Representative Gloria Fox has spent her adult life advocating for human, social, and economic development issues for those whose voices need to be heard. She has prioritized issues involving basic human services and community development and is well known for advocating the concerns of families. As a result of her work, significant reforms in the Department of Social Services foster care program were recommended and implemented. She continues to be a community activist and has always been committed to inclusionary politics as her work is guided by input from her district's residents. In 2011, she was the recipient of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators Lifetime Achievement Award and has been honored by many other organizations over the course of her career including the Women of Excellence Award from the National Foundation of Women Legislators.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice-Chair, Joint Committee on Elder Affairs

Joint Committee on Ways and Means; Veterans and Federal Affairs

House Committee on Ways and Means; Redistricting

Founding Member, Foster Care Legislative Caucus

Member, Massachusetts Health Disparities Commission

Member, Massachusetts Progressive Caucus; Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus

Chair, Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Dana Farber Health Disparities Commission

Region 1 Chair/Vice-Chair, Black Caucus of State Legislators Environmental Committee, National

Educational Background

Community Fellow, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Boston and Everett Public Schools

In Her Own Words

“I encourage people to consider a life in service, because this is about service, we’re serving the poor, we’re serving the working people, we’re serving the people of color that are struggling each and every day.”

SARA OLIVIA GARCIA

School Committee, City of Cambridge

1986-1987

Racial/Ethnic Background: Mexican American



Public Service Highlights

Sara Olivia Garcia ran in 1985 and won a seat on the Cambridge School Committee. During her campaign, she advocated for bilingual education and other related issues important to immigrant communities, particularly gaining support from the Latino and Haitian communities. She chaired the Committee on Bilingual Education and created a program to improve understanding of laws and rights for undocumented parents and students. Now residing in New York City, she has over 40 years of experience in the education field as a teacher, advisor, consultant, and researcher.

Electoral Significance

Sara Olivia Garcia was the first Latina to serve on the Cambridge School Committee.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chairperson, Committee on Bilingual Education

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Multi-Cultural Specialist, World Health Jamaica High School Project

Teacher (9th-12th), McKinley Magnet School

Staff Development Consultant and Advisor, Something Good in the World

Field Research Coordinator, National Coalition of Advocates for Students

Associate Director Center, Education Development Center, Inc.

Curriculum Development/Education Coach, LearnNow, Inc.

Educational Background

Edd, School for Educational Leadership for Change, Fielding Graduate University

BA, Special Education, Mount Saint Mary College

Current Position

Trainer and Consultant, The Efficacy Institute, Inc.; Parent Educator, Ramapo for Children

ALTHEA GARRISON

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 5th Suffolk

1993-1994

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black American



Public Service Highlights

Althea Garrison has stepped up to run for several offices, including Mayor of Boston, the Boston City Council, the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and the Massachusetts State Senate. Althea was elected State Representative in 1992 and served the 5th Suffolk district for one term. Althea's most significant achievements while in office included working to secure increased funding for public housing and passage of the mail-in voter registration law.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Housing and Urban Development Committee

Chair, Committee on Election Laws

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Vice President, Uphams Corner Health Center

Friends of Boston Symphony Orchestra

Founding Sponsor, Washington D.C. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial

Founding Sponsor, National Museum, United States Army

Lifetime Member, Massachusetts Legislation Association

Educational Background

MSM, Lesley University

BS, Suffolk University

C.S.S. Administration and Management, Harvard University Extension

Current Position

Clerk IV, Office of the State Controller, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Stay focused and maintain
your values and independence.”

CHARLOTTE GOLAR RICHIE

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 5th Suffolk

1995-1999

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Driven by a deeply held commitment to civil rights, fairness, and equality, Charlotte Golar Richie was elected to three terms in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, representing the people of Dorchester and Roxbury. She chaired the Committee on Housing & Urban Development -- the first time a freshman legislator was appointed committee chair. In 2013, she ran for Mayor of Boston and finished third in a 12-person primary. She has received numerous awards for her work in housing, economic development, government, management, and public service.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chief of Housing & Director, Dept. of Neighborhood Development, Boston

Senior Advisor, Federal, State and Community Affairs, Governor Patrick

Chair, Joint Committee on Housing and Urban Development

Vice Chair, Boston Legislative Delegation

Member, Massachusetts Black and Latino Caucus; Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators; Massachusetts Children's Caucus

Co-Chair, Transition Team, Mayor Martin Walsh

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Advisory Board, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy

Member, Tufts Plan Foundation Board; Boston's Higher Ground Board

Member, Ward 15 Democratic Committee; Democratic State Committee

Member, YouthBuild USA Board; The Haiti Fund/The Boston Foundation

U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer – Kenya, East Africa

Educational Background

MBA, Suffolk University, Sawyer School of Management

MS, Journalism, Columbia University

BA, English, Rutgers College, Rutgers University

Current Position

Commissioner, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“If we want good government, if we want good policies, if we want fairness and justice, we can't sit on the sidelines. There are lots of ways to get involved – run for office and be the candidate, or get out there and recruit and support good candidates.

We often think there is someone more experienced or qualified – but really what counts is the determination to make a difference.”

SAUNDRA GRAHAM

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 4th & 28th Middlesex

1976-1988

City Council, City of Cambridge

1972-1976

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

First elected in 1971 to the Cambridge City Council, Sandra Graham played a key role in obtaining federal housing dollars for Cambridge and several public housing complexes received comprehensive rehabilitation and modernization funds through her efforts. Sandra served five terms as a State Representative and worked on ensuring economic justice for the poor, seniors, the unemployed, minorities and women, and was a strong advocate for affirmative action and enforcement, housing, childcare, environmental protection, tax reform, and quality human services through the state budget. She has received numerous awards including the National Sojourner Truth Award from the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs; the Recognition Award by the Central Square Cambridge Businessmen's Association, and the "Woman of the Year" in government award by the Boston Chapter of the National Organization for Women.

Electoral Significance

Sandra Graham was the first Black woman to serve as State Representative from Cambridge

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Joint Committee on Housing and Urban Development

Chair, Massachusetts Black Legislative Caucus

Member, Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators

Chair, Housing and Land Use Committee

Vice-Mayor, Cambridge

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Chair, Multicultural Arts Center Committee

Founder, Childcare Coalition

Member, Boston Black United Fund; Secretary, National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials

President, Riverside Planning Team

Board of Directors, Cambridge Community Center

Co-founder; President, Riverside Cambridgeport Community Dev. Corp.

Educational Background

University of Massachusetts; Harvard University Extension

Retired

HWEI-LING GREENEY

Select Board, Town of Amherst

2005-2008

Racial/Ethnic Background: Asian/Taiwanese



Public Service Highlights

During her two terms in office, Hwei-Ling Greeney encouraged the Town of Amherst to establish a homeless shelter and to ensure that the shelter is a behavior-based shelter in which sobriety is not a criterion for admission but respecting the rights of others is required. She also worked with the town to ensure human service agencies receiving town funding stay accountable to the town and the public.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member; Vice-Chair; Chair, Committee on Homelessness

Member, Town Meeting

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Founder, Amherst Community Connections

Educational Background

MA, Environmental Studies, Clark University

BA, Philosophy, Clark University

Current Position

Executive Director, Amherst Community Connections

In Her Own Words

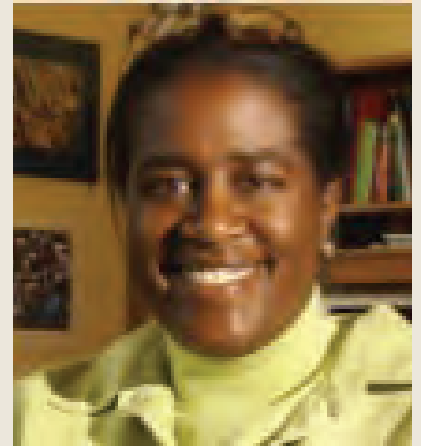
“My cultural heritage gave me the persistence and courage to do what is right and not what is popular. Civic engagement is important. It gives those who are without a voice a voice.”

ROBIN HARRIS

School Committee, City of Cambridge Ward 2

1994-1995; 1998-1999

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

During her two terms on the Cambridge School Committee, Robin worked to promote bilingual education and spearheaded an initiative to improve the diversity of the teaching staff in Cambridge schools. Working with parents and community leaders, she also led the effort to expand the program to distribute contraceptives at Cambridge Rindge and Latin.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Special Needs Sub-Committee

Chair, Curriculum Evaluation Sub-Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Secretary, Cambridge NAACP

President, Teacher's Association

Member, Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts

Delegate, Massachusetts Democratic Convention

LUCIA HENRIQUEZ

School Committee, City of Chelsea

2004-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Shortly after her election to the Chelsea School Committee, Lucia Henriquez rose to become the Vice-Chair of the Chelsea School Committee followed by Chair of the committee. She has been honored for her community service and leadership work by the Chelsea Commission on Hispanic Affairs, was given the Human Services Worker of the Year Award in 2001, and recognized as Chelsea Adult Resident of the Year in 2005.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair and Vice-Chair, Chelsea School Committee

Notary Public, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Board member, Chelsea REACH Program

Board member, Centro Latino de Chelsea

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Community Organizer, Chelsea Collaborative

Housing Search Specialist, Tri-City Community Action Program (Malden)

Community Worker, Reaching Out to Chelsea Adolescents

Emergency Housing Manager, HarborCOV (Chelsea)

Legal Advocate, HarborCOV

Educational Background

BS, Human Services, Cambridge College

Current Position

Financial Coach, The Neighborhood Developers/CONNECT

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“I encourage women of color to be civically engaged in their community and to rely on one another.”

DENISE MARIE HURST

School Committee, City of Springfield At-Large

2010-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican and African American



Public Service Highlights

Springfield School Committee Member Denise Hurst considers some of her most important accomplishments to be: developing community “Meet & Greets,” advocating for teachers’ contracts that offer fair and competitive wages, and advocating for new and engaging literature to engage children in reading.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice Chair, Springfield School Committee

District V Secretary/Treasurer, Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, UMass Women Into Leadership Board of Directors

Co-Chair of Budget & Personnel, Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

Member, Executive Board of MotherWoman, Inc

Member, United Way Women’s Leadership Council

Rape/Sexual Assault Counselor, EveryWoman’s Center

Big Sister, Big Brother/Big Sister

Educational Background

BA, Psychology, University of Massachusetts Amherst

MSW, Springfield College

Current Position

Quality Improvement Coordinator and Human Rights Coordinator,

Massachusetts Department of Mental Health

Adjunct Professor, Cambridge College

Electoral Significance

Denise Hurst was the top vote-getter of all School Committee and City Council candidates in the 2013 municipal election in the City of Springfield.

MARJORIE J. HURST

School Committee, City of Springfield

1998-2010

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black



Public Service Highlights

Marjorie Hurst first ran for School Committee in Springfield in 1989 and came in second by a margin of 200 votes. She ran again in 1997, won, and held office for 12 years. Two significant achievements included organizing the Urban Division of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and playing an instrumental role selecting two superintendents who moved the school system forward. Working closely with another member, she was also able to gain passage of a school uniform policy.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Division IX, Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Vice Chair, Springfield School Committee

Committee Member, Building & Maintenance

Committee Member, Budget & Finance

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Baystate Academy Charter Board of Trustees

Steering Committee Member, Women's Leadership Council, United Way of Pioneer Valley

Educational Background

JD, Western New England College

MEd, University of Massachusetts Amherst

BA, Howard University

Current Position

Editor, An African American Point Of View, Community News Magazine

In Her Own Words

“It is exciting to see so many women of color running for and winning elective office throughout the Commonwealth. Ours is a much-needed perspective.”

LISA JACKSON

School Committee, Town of Brookline

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Elected to the Brookline School Committee in 2014, Lisa Jackson is committed to high quality education for the town of Brookline..

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Curriculum Sub-Committee

Member, Policy Review Sub-Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Director, The Reset Foundation

Board Director, National College Advising Corps

Board Director, Year Up

Former Board Treasurer, Single Stop USA

Educational Background

PhD, Psychological Studies, Stanford University

MA, Social Services in Education, Stanford University

BA, Psychology, Howard University

Current Position

Co-Founder and Principal, Jackson-Ellis Associates

In Her Own Words

“Better to be part of the solution than part of the problem.”

TERRY KWAN

School Committee, Town of Brookline

1984-2002

Racial/Ethnic Background: Chinese American



Public Service Highlights

Terry Kwan served the town of Brookline as a School Committee Member from the mid-80s to the early 2000s. During her tenure, she served two years as Chairwoman of the committee and was heavily involved in construction decisions for Brookline schools.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Board Member, Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA)

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC)

Board Member, Museum Institute for Teaching Science (MITS)

Community Representative, Institutional Biosafety Committees, Harvard Medical School, Dana Farber Cancer Institute, and Partners Healthcare

Educational Background

MSEd, Hofstra University

BA, SUNY Binghamton

Current Position

Residential Sales Associate, Karp, Liberman & Kern, Sotheby's International Realty

Electoral Significance

Terry Kwan served as Brookline School Committee Member for 18 years (six 3-year terms).

GLADYS LEBRÓN-MARTÍNEZ

City Council, City of Holyoke Ward 1

2012-Present

School Committee, City of Holyoke

2004-2011

Racial/Ethnic Background: Hispanic/Puerto Rican



Public Service Highlights

As a leader recognized for fostering the civic engagement and responsibility needed to expand opportunities for her community, Councilwoman Lebrón-Martínez is currently serving her second term on the City Council after eight years of service as School Committee Member. Her impact in Holyoke has been driven by her commitment to youth employment, education, parent engagement, anti-racism, and LGBT rights.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Development and Governmental Relations Committee

Vice-Chair, Holyoke Redevelopment Authority

Co-Chair, Joint City and School Committee

Advisory Board Member, Connections Program, Holyoke Public Schools

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Nutrition Counselor, Valley Opportunity Council/WIC

Member, Holyoke Youth Task Force

Director of Health & Human Services, Nueva Esperanza Inc.

Educational Background

Youth Development Certificate, Cambridge College

Training and/or certification in several areas, including: HIV/AIDS harm reduction, teen pregnancy, cultural sensitivity and competencies, workforce development, case management, nutrition counseling

Current Position

Youth Center Manager, CareerPoint (Hampden County)

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Get involved in your community. Become very informed. Take advantage of a lot of opportunities.”

CAROL J. LEWIS-CAULTON

City Council, City of Springfield Ward 5

2000-2001

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

A major advocate of ward representation, Carol Lewis-Caulton was known for her fearlessness and her strong advocacy for neighborhoods. She also sponsored and shepherded several ordinances through the process including measures on smoking, dog control, and excessive noise control.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chairperson, Health and Safety Committee

Police Commission

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Wesley United Methodist Church

Member, Springfield Community Complaint Review Board

Educational Background

Nursing Program, Springfield Technical Community College

Retired

Electoral Significance

Carol Lewis-Caulton was the first Black woman to serve on Springfield City Council.

CANDICE E. LOPES

School Committee, City of Springfield

1987-1991

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American

Public Service Highlights

School Committee Member Candice Lopes was honored by the Black Leadership Alliance in 2012 for being a “door opener.”

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Director, Community Outreach and Constituent Services, Massachusetts State Senator James T. Welch

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Vice President, National Association of the Advancement of Colored People, Springfield Branch

Board Member, Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services

Director, Community Outreach, State Senator Stephen J. Bouniconti

Educational Background

BA, University of Massachusetts Amherst

BARBARA LOVE

Amherst Regional School Committee, Town of Amherst

1998-2004

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black



Public Service Highlights

A committed activist and leader in Amherst, Barbara Love served on the Amherst Regional School Committee fighting for issues that concerned diversity and equity. Barbara continues to be a voice in the community, not only as an activist, but also as an educator.

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, National Training Laboratories

Board Member, National Black Women's Health Initiative

Board Member, The Equity Institute

Educational Background

PhD, Multicultural Organizational Development, UMass Amherst

BA, History and Political Science, Arkansas A.M.&N. College

Current Position

Owner, AKAR Institute

In Her Own Words

“Our town Amherst...our beloved community. This is a community where love and care prevail. This is a community that experiences racism, and this is a community that is committed to creating a town with no racism.”

KONSTANTINA B. LUKES

City Council, City of Worcester At-Large

2000-2007; 2010-Present

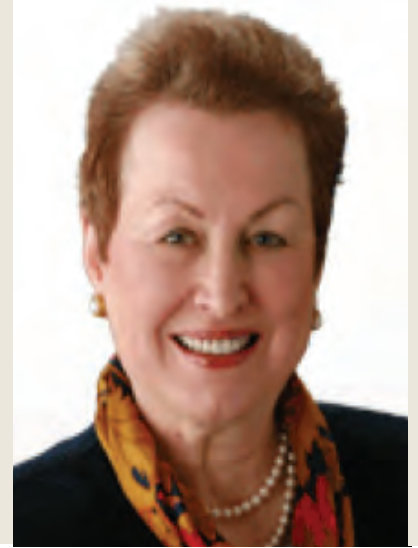
Mayor, City of Worcester

2007-2010 (*popularly elected in 2008*)

School Committee, City of Worcester

1980-1988

Racial/Ethnic Background: Albanian



Public Service Highlights

Konstantina Lukes began her career in public service as the first Chair of the Worcester City Manager's Commission on the Status of Women. She went on to serve as a Commissioner for the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. After her tenure as Commissioner, Konstantina served as a member of the Worcester School Committee and, in 1999, was elected to the City Council. She then served as the Mayor of Worcester from 2007-2010. As a City Councilor, she continues to advocate for her community and has worked on establishing a long-range tax reduction program, promoting public safety through a strengthened community policing program, and fostering healthy neighborhoods.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chairperson, Standing Committee on Public Service

Vice Chairman, School Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Director, ACLU

Member of Legal Panel, ACLU

Educational Background

JD, University of Connecticut

BS, Simmons College

Current Position

Attorney, Konstantina B. Lukes, Esq.

Electoral Significance

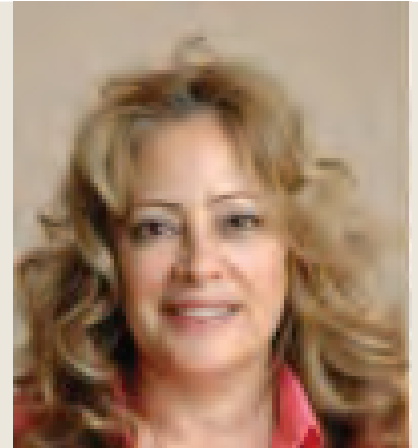
Councilor Lukes was the first popularly elected female mayor of Worcester.

ZAIDA LUNA

City Council, Springfield Ward 1

2010-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

In her third term of service as a Springfield City Councilor, Zaida Luna was involved in previous efforts to bring ward representation to Springfield years. She was first elected in 2009 and serves on several committees.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, General Government Committee

Race & Civil Rights Committee

Health & Human Services Committee

Elders Affairs Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Springfield Partners for Community Action Board of Directors

Member, New North Citizens Council Board of Directors

Educational Background

Puerto Rico Junior College

Electoral Significance

Zaida Luna is the Springfield City Council's only woman of color.

JEAN MCGUIRE

School Committee, City of Boston At-Large

1982-1991

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Jean McGuire is credited with being the first African American female to be elected to the Boston School Committee. She has dedicated her career to the movement for quality education for people of color in metropolitan Boston and in 2012 received the Lifetime Achievement Award from Community Change, Inc. and Humanist of the Year award from the Boston Ethical Community in 2004.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Executive Director, Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO, Inc.)

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, The Children's Museum

Board Member, Community Change, Inc.

Board Member, Encampment for Citizenship

Board Member, Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus

Board Member, Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts

Educational Background

Honorary Doctorate, Salem State College

MA, Tufts University

BS, Boston State College

Current Position

Executive Director, Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity

In Her Own Words

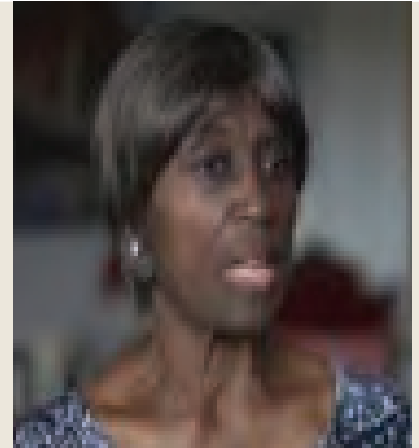
"We all have the ability to do something good."

OGRETTA V. MCNEIL

School Committee, City of Worcester

1998-2007

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Oretta McNeil won election to the Worcester School Committee in her first bid for public office and served four terms. She prioritized making sure that all students could succeed academically, securing sufficient funds for existing programs, integrating parents into the educational process, and making professional development opportunities available for staff. She also sought to ensure a safe and nurturing educational environment.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Student Advisor, Holy Cross College

Mentor, Worcester public schools

Educational Background

PhD, Clark University

BA, Howard University

Current Affiliation

Member, Worcester Arts Museum Education Committee

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“If you want to be a public leader, and make a difference, you have to win the elections. To win the elections you have to get out there, know what the issues of the people are and be known. Engage with the people and be a part of the community.”

BETTY MEDINA-LICHTENSTEIN

School Committee, City of Holyoke Ward 2

1986-1993

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Betty Medina Lichtenstein is known as the first Puerto Rican woman in the state to attain elected office. In 1985, she ran successfully for a seat on the Holyoke School Committee through a grassroots community mobilization effort that included the Rainbow coalition. She is passionate about children and their education. Working in Holyoke for 38 years, she is the founding director of Enlace de Familias Inc. who promotes a community where all families are given the opportunity to improve their quality of life. She has received awards from community organizations, certificates of acknowledgement from the United States Congress, Massachusetts House of Representatives, Massachusetts State Senate and the Governor's Office going back as far as 1985 to the present.

Electoral Significance

Betty Medina Lichtenstein was the first Puerto Rican to be elected in Massachusetts.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

President, Valley Housing Development Corp. Carlos Vega Townhomes

Founding Member, Holyoke Community Charter School

Founder, Holyoke Youth Task Force

Board Member, Amherst College Center for Community Engagement

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Community Organizer, Quality Education for All Children; Tenant Rights/ Fair Housing; Social Justice

Educational Background

Public Schools, Puerto Rico

Current Position

Executive Director, Enlace de Familias Inc.

KEIKO M. ORRALL

State Representative, Massachusetts Legislature 12th Bristol

2011-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Japanese American



Public Service Highlights

Representative Orrall is the first Asian American to be elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives. She was first elected in a special election in 2011, followed by victorious campaigns in 2012 and 2014. Representative Orrall's contributions to date have included advocating for the financial needs of the district with local aid and education money, helping constituents resolve issues with state government, and working with others to re-open Massasoit State Park. Her efforts with the cranberry industry and agriculture have been a top priority. Locally, she has worked on water issues with the Assawompset Pond Complex and has followed a tribal casino issue closely. She has also worked on education issues related to the PARCC testing assessment and Common Core standards. She works closely with the South Coast delegation to encourage a regional approach to job creation and is a strong advocate for small businesses. Her focus has been on increasing international opportunities through exports to Asian countries. Appearing periodically on television as a conservative commentator, she is active in the Massachusetts Republican Party.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Joint Committees on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies; Labor and Workforce Development

Member, Joint Committees on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight; Public Health; Judiciary

Secretary, House Asian American Caucus and Sportsmen's Caucus

Board Member, Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators

Member, Lakeville Finance Committee; Lakeville School Needs Study Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Lakeville Republican Town Committee

Member, Japan Society of Boston; Japan American Citizens League

Member, US-Japan Council

Educational Background

BA, Smith College

In Her Own Words

"It is important for women to understand how the political process works, to have a realistic understanding of how to get elected, and to be committed to hard work. Perseverance and a positive attitude are the keys to success."

MYRA ORTIZ

School Committee, City of Lawrence District A

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

As a member of the Lawrence School Committee, Myra Ortiz takes pride in advocating for the children of Lawrence. She is a proponent of developing civic awareness in public schools and focuses on family, education, and community service. She was an Honoree at the Greater Lawrence YWCA's Tribute to Women in 2015.

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Advisory Board Member, The Salvation Army

Budget Committee Member, Esperanza Academy

Educational Background

BS, Southern New Hampshire University

AS, Northern Essex Community College

Current Position

Associate, Mayo Clinic

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“It’s not only important we tell our girls they should be leaders, it is important we show them what leadership looks like. They need to know at a young age that there are women working for them and creating a pipeline for more women in politics. That reality may be a little far off, but it is a goal that has now been placed in their sight.”

SHIRLEY J. OWENS-HICKS

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 6th Suffolk

1987-2007

School Committee, City of Boston

1984-1988

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

During her twenty-year tenure as a Representative, Shirley Owens-Hicks was a strong advocate on behalf of African Americans and other people of color, children, seniors, working families, and the poor. Her hardest fought and most-acclaimed victory involved passage of legislation to redevelop land formerly known as the Boston State Hospital site providing significant housing opportunities and services in her district. Elected to the Boston School Committee in 1983, she served as Vice-Chairwoman during the entirety of her four-year tenure. Under her leadership as the Chair of the Superintendent Search Committee, she was responsible for hiring the first African American BPS Superintendent. In 1987, she served simultaneously as State Representative and School Committee Member.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chairwoman, Committee on Federal Financial Assistance; Committee on Education, Arts, and Humanities - Massachusetts House of Representatives

Chairwoman, Committee on Local Affairs and Regional Government; Committee on Children and Families, Massachusetts House of Representatives; Vice-Chair, Committee on Bills in the Third Reading Committee on Long-term Care Services for the Elderly

Chairwoman, Massachusetts Black Legislative Caucus

Vice-Chairwoman, Boston School Committee; Superintendent Search Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

President/CEO, Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts

Advocacy Counselor, University of Massachusetts Boston

Member, National Black Agenda; Advisory Board, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy

Co-Organizer, Codman Hill Neighborhood Association

Educational Background

EdM, Harvard University

Current Affiliation

Chairwoman, New Hope Baptist Church Family Life Ministry; Chairwoman, Political Empowerment

Electoral Significance

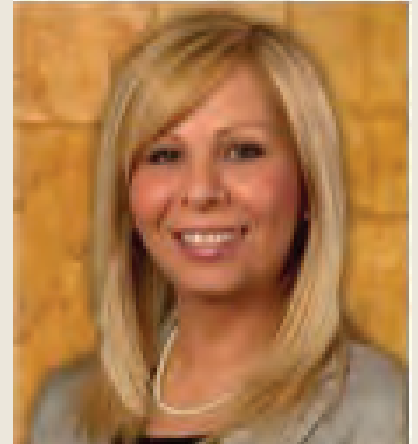
In a history-making appointment, Shirley Owens-Hicks was the first African American and first woman to Chair the Committee on Education, Arts, and Humanities in the Massachusetts Legislature.

ROSA PEREZ

School Committee, City of Springfield District 1

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

In 2013, Rosa Perez won a seat on the Springfield School Committee by beating an incumbent. She supports school-home visit programs and voted to expand the budget for the program

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Social Worker, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Director and Pastor, Children's Ministries

Chaplain and Secretary, Board of Directors, United Chaplains International

Educational Background

BA, American International College

Current Position

Springfield Education Association

Electoral Significance

In 2014, Springfield School Committeewoman Rosa Perez was honored by the Massachusetts Latino Chamber of Commerce for being a "trailblazer who took a challenge and beat the odd on behalf of the community running for the first time for elected office and demonstrating 'Si se Puede.'"

ANGELA PITTER WRIGHT

School Committee, City of Newton Ward 3

2012-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Angela Pitter Wright is a dedicated force in the City of Newton's education system. Prior to her election to the School Committee, Angela spent many years volunteering in the school district and, from 2009-2010, she served on the Superintendent Search Committee. As a School Committee Member, Angela has staunchly advocated for a more comprehensive approach to the 21st century classroom, including the use of technology not only in the classrooms but for systematic data collection and reporting.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Voting Member, Angier Building Committee and Cabot Building Committee

Member, Communications Strategy Working Group

Member, Superintendent Search Committee

Former Chair, Cabot Technology Committee

Former Member, Cabot Elementary School Council

Former Chair, Newton METCO Scholarship Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Former Member, Board of Trustees, Myrtle Baptist Church

Social Media Consultant, Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce

Educational Background

MS, Administration of Technology & Innovation, Boston University

BS, Computer Engineering, Boston University

Current Position

Founder & CEO, LiveWire Collaborative, A Social Media Consultancy

In Her Own Words

"I am immensely energetic and dedicated, and I've always had a passion for giving back. Growing up, education was never taken for granted, and there's nothing more priceless than an outstanding education for our children. I've never been one to sit on the sidelines. I firmly believe we must all be part of the solution."

AYANNA S. PRESSLEY

City Council, City of Boston At-Large

2010-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black



Public Service Highlights

Councilor Pressley was first elected to the Boston City Council in 2009, becoming the first woman of color ever elected to the Council. In her subsequent 2011 and 2013 reelection campaigns, Pressley made history as the first person of color and the first woman in 30 years to top the ticket. She created and chairs the City Council's Committee on Healthy Women, Families, and Communities which is devoted to the causes to which she has always been most devoted: stabilizing families and communities, reducing and preventing violence and trauma, combating poverty, and addressing issues that disproportionately impact women and girls. She is committed to working in partnership with community, building broad and diverse coalitions to advance policy reforms. In 2014, she was named to Boston Magazine's Power of Ideas list, was a Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce Ten Outstanding Young Leaders honoree, and earned the Victim Rights Law Center's Leadership Award. In 2015, she earned the EMILY's List Rising Star Award and was named one of *Boston Magazine's* Power Players.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Committee on Women & Healthy Communities

Vice Chair, Committee on Public Safety

Vice Chair, Committee on Special Committee on Federal Stimulus Oversight

Member, Economic Development & Planning; Education; Government Operations; City, Neighborhood Services & Veterans Affairs Committees

Senior Aide, Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy, III

Senior Aide, U.S. Senator John Kerry

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy,

Member, Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus and Emerge Massachusetts

Massachusetts Constituency Director, John Kerry for President

Educational Background

Boston University

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Walk in your truth. Be authentically you. Stand in that truth and operate with a strength of conviction.”

HILDA RAMIREZ

School Committee, City of Worcester

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina, Dominican



Public Service Highlights

Following her first run in 2011, Hilda Ramirez was elected to the Worcester School Committee in 2013. During her time in office thus far, School Committee Ramirez has worked on the turn-around team for Elm Park Elementary and the Innovation Team for Claremont

Academy, supported renewal of the superintendent's contract, voted for an IBA model for high school, and voted against using absence in school suspension policies.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice Chair, Committee on Finance and Operations

Member, Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports

Commissioner, Worcester Arts Council

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, National Hispana Leadership

Board Member, Center for Creative Leadership in Colorado Institute

Executive Director, Worcester Youth Center

Board Member, Greater Worcester Community Foundation

Board Member, Leadership Worcester

Founder, Latino History Project of Worcester

Educational Background

MA, Harvard Graduate School of Education

BS, Business, Lesley University

Current Position

Assistant Director, Latino Education Institute, Worcester State University

Electoral Significance

Hilda Ramirez is only one of two Latinas who have been elected to municipal office in Worcester.

DANA L. REBEIRO

City Council, City of New Bedford

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Cape Verdean/Black



Public Service Highlights

Dana Rebeiro won election to the New Bedford City Council in 2014 after running for a council seat in the prior two elections. During Councilor Rebeiro's tenure to date, she has successfully worked to keep the city community gardens open and ensuring that seniors benefited from 900 pounds of food as a result. She effectively serves her constituents and works to maintain New Bedford's profile on Beacon Hill.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Board Member, Art, History and Architecture

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Committee Member, Bus Riders United

Committee Member, United Families for Peace

Volunteer and Public Policy Mentor, The Women's Fund

Board Member, Coastline Elderly

Member, Cape Verdean Recognition Week

Educational Background

BA, Howard University

Current Position

Director, Community of Color Outreach, Massachusetts Democratic Party

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"I would advise her to keep a diverse circle of friends but build a strong foundation at the same time."

SARAI RIVERA

City Council, City of Worcester District 4

2012-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican American



Public Service Highlights

As someone who grew up in Worcester, Councilor Rivera has a passion for the city and believes that focusing on strengths, not deficits, is the key to success in community. Her main areas of focus during her two terms in office have been education and youth development. Councilor Rivera also considers working with diverse constituencies a high priority.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Standing Committee on Public Health & Human Services

Member, Mayor's Task Force on Immigrants and Refugees

Member, Chandler Elementary Community School Stakeholders

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Worcester Clergy/Police Community Partnership

Chair, UPCS Parent Council

Leadership Council Member, Common Pathways

Board Member, Main South Promise Neighborhoods Initiative

Board Member, Women Together/Mujeres Unidas

Educational Background

DMin, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

MSW, University of Connecticut

BS, Worcester State University

Current Position

Clinical Therapist; Co-Senior Pastor, Christian Community Church

In Her Own Words

Sarai Rivera was the first Latina elected to the Worcester City Council.

GLADYS RIVERA-ROGERS

School Committee, City of Malden At-Large

2002-2009

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

As a member of the Malden School Committee, Gladys Rivera-Rogers advocated for increased substance abuse prevention programs for Malden High School students.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Policy Subcommittee

Chair, Safety Subcommittee

Chair, Transportation Subcommittee

Member, Negotiations Committee

Malden Housing Authority

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, YWCA Board of Directors

Member, North Shore Black Women's Association

Delegate, Ward 7, Malden

Educational Background

AS, Business Administration and Management, Bunker Hill Community College

Current Position

Inspector, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership

In Her Own Words

“My focus will always be on improving the lives of the citizens of Malden and ensuring that our city is a safe, vibrant community to live, work and play.”

CARMEN ROSA

School Committee, City of Springfield At-Large

1994-1995

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican

Public Service Highlights

A community activist, Carmen Rosa was motivated by injustice and lack of resources in the school system and first ran for School Committee in 1991. She introduced the concept of school uniforms – now used in Springfield – and worked on behalf of her community in the naming of a school. She made a bid for state representative in 2000.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Parent Concerns Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Puerto Rican Cultural Center

Member, School-wide Parent Group

Ronald McDonald House (Springfield)

Educational Background

BS, Nursing, University of Massachusetts

MA, Public Health, University of Massachusetts

Current Position

Project Coordinator, Achieving Diversity Initiative, UMass College of Nursing

Electoral Significance

Carmen Rosa was the first Puerto Rican woman elected to city-wide office in Springfield.

MARTA T. ROSA

City Council, City of Chelsea At-Large

1996-1999

City Council, City of Chelsea

1990-1995

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican



Public Service Highlights

The first Latina elected to public office in Chelsea, Marta Rosa served as a member of the Chelsea School Committee, City Council, and Planning Board over a span of eleven years. Some of her most important accomplishments as an elected official include convening the first-ever children, youth, and family symposium at City Hall, organizing on the road-held council meetings in the community, and ensuring that the bilingual education budget was visible to the community – especially families. She has provided leadership, vision, and support to many local, state and national organizations focused on the needs of children, families and professionals. Marta has received numerous awards and recognition for her life's work and contributions to the Commonwealth.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

- Member, Planning Board
- Vice-President, Chelsea School Committee
- Member, Committee on Housing, Human Services & Training, City Council
- Member, Chelsea Mayor's Commission on Hispanic Affairs
- Chair, Statewide Advisory Board, Mass. Office of Child Care Services

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

- Executive Director, Child Care Resource Center, Inc.
- Director, A Kangaroos Pouch, Inc.
- Leader, Church of God Mission Board (Chelsea)
- Member, United Way Community Impact Council; CAYL Institute
- President, National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies; Parent Services Project

Educational Background

MA, Education, Cambridge College

Current Position

Chief Diversity Officer and Senior Executive Director for Government & External Affairs and Community Impact, Wheelock College

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Stories are important. Don't be afraid to tell your story and tell other people's stories as an advocate - as a political person serving in office. Stories convince people. Stories give life to the issues and your causes.”

AMY MAH SANGIOLO

Board of Aldermen, City of Newton At-Large/Ward 4

1997-2013

Racial/Ethnic Background: Chinese and Japanese American/Asian American



Public Service Highlights

Amy first ran for the Newton Board of Aldermen against two incumbents, won on a recount by 12 votes and is currently the longest sitting Asian American elected official in the Commonwealth. She has served nine terms. Some of her most important accomplishments include building a moratorium discussion on 'tear downs,' a tree preservation ordinance, and requirement for outside consultant fees as part of the permitting process.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Zoning and Planning

Member, Post Audit and Oversight

Member, Aldermanic Community Preservation Committee

Member, Land Use

Chair, Committee on Programs and Services

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board of Trustees, Harry S. Dow Legal Assistance Fund

Trustee, Charles River Neighborhood Foundation

Founder, Asian American Democrats of Massachusetts

Educational Background

JD, Rutgers Law School - Newark

BA, Barnard College/Columbia University

Current Position

Attorney

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

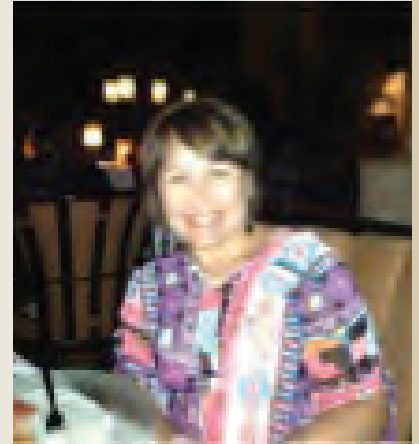
"Don't be afraid to be yourself.
Voters respect honesty."

LILLIAN SANTIAGO-BAUZA

City Council, City of Holyoke Ward 1

2004-2007

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican



Public Service Highlights

Lillian Santiago served two terms on the Holyoke City Council starting in 2004. She has dedicated much of her work to addressing issues facing Latinas and women, including public health issues in her community. In the early 1990s, she was active on issues regarding ward representation, redistricting, and bilingual ballots for voters. As a city councilor, she continued this work through her advocacy for bilingual aid in the 1964 Voting Rights Act renewal in 2006 and leadership as a board member of several nonprofit and advocacy organizations.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Holyoke Citizens Group

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Co-Chair, Latino-American Advisory Commission, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Board Member, Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts

Board Member, National Conference for Community and Justice

Board Member, Care Center in Massachusetts

Educational Background

MEd, Education and Counseling, Cambridge College

BS, Psychology and Public Administration, Inter-American University of Puerto Rico

Current Position

Operational Manager, Bauza Associates, LLC

Electoral Significance

In 2003, Lillian Santiago became the first Latina elected Holyoke City Council for Ward 1.

SUSANA SEGAT

School Committee, City of Cambridge

1996-2001

Racial/Ethnic Background: Hispanic



Public Service Highlights

Susana Segat served for three terms on the Cambridge School Committee and received an Abigail Adams Award from the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus in 2007. She was the first Latina elected as an 8th Congressional District Delegate to the 1996 Democratic National Convention.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Founding Chair, Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

Board Member, Massachusetts Port Authority

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Friends of the Cambridge Public Library

Board Member, Cambridge Community Television

Educational Background

MA Education, Stanford University

BA, Psychology, Stanford University

Current Position

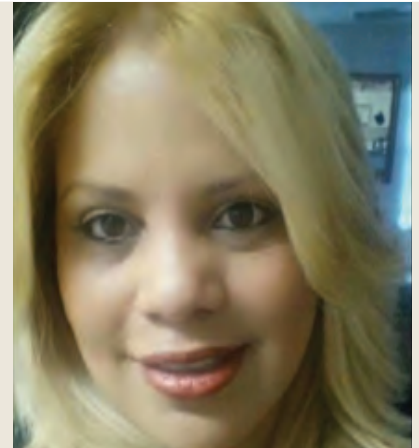
NeighborMedia Correspondent, Cambridge Community Television

GRISEL SILVA

City Council, City of Lawrence District B

2006-2011

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Grisel Silva was first elected in 2005 to the Lawrence City Council and during her three terms in office, she was elected Council Vice-President and chaired the Committee on Budget and Finance. During her tenure, she also served on many committees, including Personnel, Ordinance, Housing, Ad-Hoc, and Public Safety. She worked with the Police Department, Department of Public Works, Planning Office, local schools, and health services to improve her community.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Committee on Budget and Finance

Member, Committee on Personnel

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Secretary, Lawrence Family Development Charter School

Current Position

International Procurement Specialist, Aero Supply USA

In Her Own Words

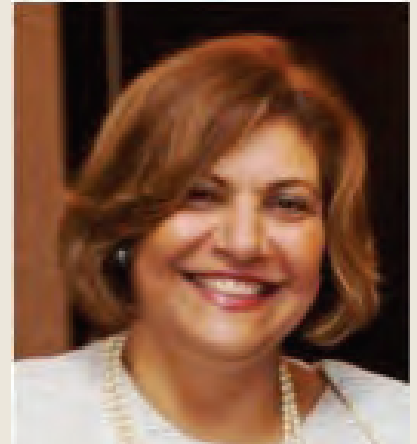
“[My work as a City Councilor included].....Educating families by utilizing support services, community outreach working to provide leadership, collaboration, advocacy, and shared decision making with my constituents, families and community members...”

JULIA SILVERIO

City Council, City of Lawrence District B

1998-2002

Racial/Ethnic Background: Hispanic, Dominican Republic



Public Service Highlights

Julia Silverio became the first Hispanic to serve on the Lawrence City Council after being elected in 1997 and she is credited with helping other Hispanic women to run for office. During her campaign she advocated for more affordable housing, among other issues. She ran for mayor of Lawrence in 2009. She was the recipient of the YWCA Tribute to Women in Industry Award in 1986 and received the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year Award.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Jobs and Economic Development Committee, Lawrence Mayoral Transition Board of Trustees

Member, New England Hispanic Commission for Civil Rights

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Central Catholic High School Board of Trustees

Member, Board of Trustees, St. Mary's School

Founding Member, Lawrence Youth Commission

Founding Member, Los Trinitarios Club

Founding Member and Treasurer, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Current Position

Business Owner, Silverio Insurance

DENISE SIMMONS

City Council, City of Cambridge

2002-Present

Mayor, City of Cambridge

2008-2009

School Committee, City of Cambridge

1992-2001

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Throughout her public career, Councilor Denise Simmons has worked to involve people in their own governance and make local government more accessible to a wider range of people. A staunch advocate for strengthening and revitalizing small businesses in Cambridge, she has supported state legislation to promote job training and placement in the rising green job industry. In 2010 she ran for the Massachusetts Senate and placed third in the primary.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, School Committee

Vice Mayor, Cambridge

Justice of the Peace; Notary Public

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Executive Director, Civic Unity Committee

Educational Background

MS, Psychotherapy, Antioch College

BS, Sociology, University of Massachusetts Boston

Electoral Significance

In 2008, Denise Simmons became mayor in the city of Cambridge by the City Council and became the first openly lesbian African-American mayor in the country.

MARIE ST. FLEUR

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 5th Suffolk

1999-2010

Racial/Ethnic Background: Haitian American



Public Service Highlights

As the first Haitian American elected to state office in the United States and the first Haitian immigrant to hold public office in Massachusetts, Marie St. Fleur has spent her career being a vocal advocate for children and families. She championed two-way bilingual education, alternative education, the establishment of One on One Wireless Initiative to address the digital divide in our public schools, and led the establishment of the new Massachusetts Board and Department of Early Education and Care.

She was the first woman of color to serve as the Vice-Chair of the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice-Chair, Ways and Means Committee

House Chair, Joint Committee on Education, Arts and Humanities

Chief of Advocacy and Strategic Investment, City of Boston

Member, Universal Pre-K Task Force, City of Boston

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Dorchester Boys and Girls Club Board of Directors

Member, Project Hope Board of Directors

Member, Nativity Preparatory School Board of Directors

Member, NAACP

Chair, The Advisory Council for the Haiti Fund at The Boston Foundation

President, Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association

Educational Background

JD, Boston College

BA, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Current Position

President and CEO, Bessie Tartt Wilson Initiative for Children

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“If service is your passion, embrace it. Stay focused, stay relevant, work your plan build your network. Move the needle forward and know when to pass the baton.”

AGMA M. SWEENEY

City Council, City of Westfield At-Large

2012-2013

Racial/Ethnic Background: Hispanic



Public Service Highlights

As someone with a long history of community service in both Westfield and in western Massachusetts, Westfield City Councilor Agma Sweeney focused on serving her community during a time of economic challenges and period of infrastructure improvements. She also prioritized seniors and aging issues while in office.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Advisory Committee, Re-Thinking Downtown Westfield

Member, Council on Aging

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Board of Directors, Westfield Athenaeum

Vice President and Scholarship Committee Chair, Westfield Spanish American Association

Member, Westfield Women's Club

Liaison, Friends of the Columbia Greenway Rail to Trail

Member, YMCA Board of Directors

Member, WIN (Westfield Women Involved Now)

Educational Background

BA, Washington University

Current Position

Aide, Massachusetts Congressman Richard Neal

GREER HSING TAN SWISTON

Board of Aldermen, City of Newton At-Large/Ward 3

2008-2012

Racial/Ethnic Background: Chinese



Public Service Highlights

After losing her first bid to office in 2005, Greer Hsing Tan Swiston was elected in 2007 and served 3 terms as a Member of the Board of Aldermen in Newton. One of her most significant achievements while serving was her vote against the hotel and meals tax. She also spoke out against bans and frivolous resolution and promoted better use of the internet and technology in disseminating information to communities. She ran for State Representative in 2004 and 2012.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Judicial Nominating Committee

Member, Public Education Nominating Committee

Commissioner, Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

Executive Board Member, Chinese Cultural Association

President, Society of Women Engineers, Greater Boston

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Committee Member, Global Task Force, Greater Boston Association of Realtors

Member, Tanners Hill Condo Association Board

Member, Hager Meadows Condo Association Board

Board Member, League of Women Voters - Newton

Volunteer, Girl Scouts

Board Member, Newton West Little League

Educational Background

BS, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Current Position

After-School Teacher, Newton Community Education

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“You cannot be elected if you don’t run for office. We need you out there. Former elected officials make great citizens... So serve in public office, if only to better enable you to be a better citizen. It’s what makes our country strong.”

DOLORES THIBAUT-MUÑOZ

City Council, City of Fitchburg Ward 4

2012-2014

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina/Mexican and Guatemalan Roots



Public Service Highlights

Prior to her election to the Fitchburg City Council, Dolores Thibault-Muñoz was appointed to several positions in Fitchburg and served in leadership roles as the Executive Director of the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center and Interim Executive Director of Growing Places and House of Peace and Education. While in office, she worked hard to represent her constituents, be responsive to their needs, and also ensure their regular participation in ward meetings.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Legislative Affairs Committee

Public Works Committee

Member, Fitchburg Zoning Board

Member, Library Feasibility Study Task Force

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Fitchburg Civic Forum

Member, North Central, Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board

Member, Growing Places Garden Project

Member, MOC Head Start Policy Council

Member, North Central Massachusetts Community Health Network

Educational Background

BS, Women's and Gender Studies, DePaul University

Current Position

Consultant

In Her Own Words

"I wanted to run to give others an opportunity that someone like me, a young woman of color could do it."

ANGELA THORPE

Board of Selectmen, Town of East Longmeadow

2013-Present

School Committee, Town of East Longmeadow

2005-2011

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black



Public Service Highlights

With a long record of extensive community involvement, Selectwoman Angela Thorpe has held positions on many commissions, charters, and boards in East Longmeadow. Initially elected in 2005 to the School Committee, she was the first Black candidate for the East Longmeadow Board of Selectmen and has had a long career of public service in the town.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Clerk, Board of Selectmen, Town of East Longmeadow

East Longmeadow Charter Commissioner

Program Administrator for East Longmeadow School District

Chair, Massachusetts Association of School Committees, District 5

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, East Longmeadow Council of Aging

Member, East Longmeadow Garden Club

Member, Friends of the East Longmeadow Public Library

Lifetime Member, Massachusetts Senior Action Council

Educational Background

BA, Business Administration and Computer Science, Gordon College

In Her Own Words

“The ability to be open and listen to people is very important in this position.”

JOSSIE M. VALENTIN

City Council, City of Holyoke Ward 4

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican



Public Service Highlights

Holyoke City Councilor Jossie Valentin provides a strong voice for her constituents and is currently working on a proposal to conduct an inventory of abandoned and historic buildings to deal with blight. She introduced and ensured passage of the local option meals tax which generates additional revenue for the city.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

- Board of Directors, Wistariahurst Museum, Holyoke, MA
- Public Service Committee, Holyoke City Council
- Development & Governmental Relations Committee, Holyoke City Council
- Founding Member, Holyoke GLBTQ Task Force, Holyoke, MA
- Advisory Board, Roca Inc., Springfield, MA

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

- Director, Psychiatric Evaluation and Stabilization Unit, Hampden County Correctional Center, Ludlow, MA
- Director, Arbor House Transitional Support Services, Holyoke, MA
- Director, Casa Latina, Northampton, MA

Educational Background

- MA, Forensic Psychology, American International College
- BA, Psychology, University of Puerto Rico

Current Position

Bilingual Senior Academic Counselor, Holyoke Community College

In Her Own Words

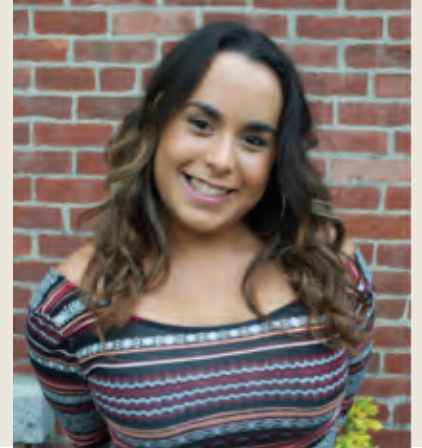
“Growing up in Puerto Rico, I volunteered for many political campaigns, but I never thought that I would run for office. When I decided to run in 2013, I realized the importance of electing women – particularly women of color – into office. We need to have more women representing our communities, especially at the local and state level. I also ran as an out candidate, so I feel that my being in office is important as a woman of color and as a lesbian. When folks approach me and say “you motivated me to run for office”, it is a reminder as to one of the reasons why we need diverse candidates in leadership positions. I love my community and I am honored to serve the City of Holyoke.”

MELINDA VEGA

School Committee, City of Chelsea District 3

2008-2011

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

At the age of 18, Melinda Vega decided to run as a write-in candidate for the Chelsea School Committee and won, making her the youngest elected school committee member.

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Community Organizer, Chelsea Creek Action Group

Resident Community Organizer, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation

Educational Background

Student, University of Massachusetts Boston

Current Position

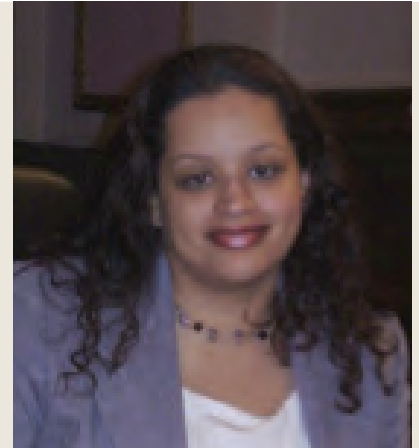
Health Promoter/Organizer, The Unite Here Health Fund

MARILYN VEGA-TORRES

City Council, City of Chelsea District 6

2006-2011

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

During her tenure, Marilyn Vega-Torres worked on environmental, public safety, and education issues. First winning election as a write-in candidate, she was the second Hispanic woman to represent District 6 in Chelsea. She was the first Latina elected as President for City Council.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

President, City Council

Member, Public Health Sub-Committee

Member, Education & Training Sub-Committee

Member, Inter-Governmental Affairs, & Inspectional Services Sub-Committee

Member, Rules & Ordinances Sub-Committee

Educational Background

BS, Management, Lesley University

Current Position

Property Manager, The Hamilton Company

In Her Own Words

“I chose to run for council because you have more influence on the decisions that affect our city. I am able to give back and work with the community I grew up in and make positive changes for the betterment of the city.”

JUANITA BROOKS WADE

School Committee, City of Boston

1986-1991

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

In addition to her elected position on the Boston School Committee, Juanita Wade spent more than three decades in the public sector which included leadership roles in the Blue Ribbon Commission on Community Learning Centers and in the Mayor's cabinet as the Chief of Human Services.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

President, U.S. Conference of City Human Services Officials

Chief of Human Services, Mayor's Office, City of Boston

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Executive Director, Blue Ribbon Commission on Community Learning Centers

Executive Director, City for Youth and Families

School Teacher, Boston Public Schools

Chief Executive Officer, Freedom House

Executive Director, DC Education Compact

Educational Background

Post-Graduate Certificate, University of Massachusetts

Certificate, University of Massachusetts

BA, Simmons College

Current Position

Director, Community Relations-Making Home Affordable, Fannie Mae

Electoral Significance

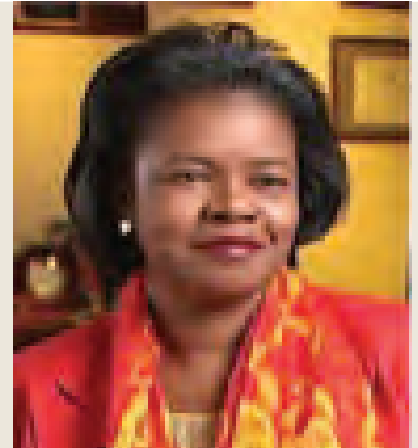
Juanita Brooks Wade was the third woman of color to be elected to the Boston School Committee.

DIANNE WILKERSON

State Senate, Massachusetts Legislature 2nd Suffolk

1994-2008

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Dianne Wilkerson made history in 1992 when she became the first Black woman elected to the Massachusetts State Senate. Among the policies she championed to improve the lives of those underserved by government, she sponsored bills to protect low-income, Black, and other minority residents of Massachusetts, including a measure authorizing the collection of data relative to racial profiling in traffic stops and one to curb high interest rates on bank loans. In 2014, she was honored as one of 18 “women of color changing the world” because of her advocacy for fair housing, safer communities, access to jobs, equitable health care, and same sex marriage. Wilkerson became the first African American woman in Boston to become a partner in a major law firm, where she practiced until being elected to the Massachusetts State Senate.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

- Senate Chair, Committee on State Admin. and Regulatory Oversight
- Vice-Chair, Joint Committee on Financial Services
- Member, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
- Member, Joint Committees on Education; Mental Health and Substance Abuse; Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets
- Co-Chair, Commission to Eliminate Racial & Ethnic Healthcare Disparities
- Member, Caucus of Women Legislators

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

- Member, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative
- Member, Advisory Board, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy
- Trustee, Roxbury Trust Fund
- Advisory Board Member, Asian American Civic Association
- Member, Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board

Educational Background

- JD, Boston College
- BS, American International College

Current Position

- President, EverRox Cooperative Corporation

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“There’s no right way to get there. Respect and recognize the value of your life and your experience not after 20 years of working and getting ready to do it, but the right now. It’s the right now. It’s knowing that you’re really. Ready when you say you’re ready.”

JAMIE WILLIAMSON

City Council, City of Pittsfield

1996-2000

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Jamie Williamson was the first black woman elected to the Pittsfield City Council.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Commissioner, Access to Justice Commission, Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts

Executive Director, Massachusetts Fair Housing Center (Holyoke)

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Red Cross

Board Member, Berkshire Medical Center

Board Member, The Rotary Club

Board member, The Norman Rockwell Museum

Educational Background

BA, Smith College

Current Position

Chair, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination

In Her Own Words

“We need to make sure that women are throughout Massachusetts, ready to lead and that they’re being taught to lead all of the time.”

FRANCIA WISNEWSKI

School Committee, Town of Greenfield

2012-2015

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

First elected to the Greenfield School Committee in 2012, Francia Wisniewski has spent much of her career focused on early education, and increasing literacy has been a main focus of her efforts. She enjoys interacting with teachers to create positive change for children in the school system. She was a 2008 Schott Fellow.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice-Chair, Greenfield School Committee

Member, Advisory Board, Franklin County Children's Advocacy Center

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Participant, Early Educator Fellowship Initiative

Fellow, Emerge Massachusetts

Member, Greenfield Democratic Town Committee

Coordinator, Family Center Programs for Community Action

Educational Background

MS, Education, University of Massachusetts Amherst

BS, Biology/Chemistry, Universidad del Valle, Columbia

Current Position

Regional Program Manager, Raising A Reader

In Her Own Words

"I am passionate about advocating for and promoting legislation that supports families and children."

LISA A. WONG

Mayor, City of Fitchburg

2008-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Asian American, Chinese descent



Public Service Highlights

In her fourth term as Mayor of Fitchburg, Mayor Lisa Wong first ran for office in 2007 when she was 27 years old. She is the first minority and Asian American elected in Fitchburg and the youngest female Mayor elected in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. She began working for the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority in 2001 and became the agency's Executive Director in 2004. As Director, she managed several urban renewal projects to revitalize Fitchburg, such as the redevelopment of a former General Electric facility into a modern business complex.

During her tenure as Fitchburg's Mayor, she has improved bond rating hence enabling the city of Fitchburg to balance its budget. She has spearheaded the improvement of the school system that has led to improved academic performance of students. In addition, her public health advocacy has helped save lives and improve the quality of life among the people of Fitchburg. Mayor Wong has become known throughout the state as one of the most effective leaders in economic restructuring, environmental affairs, and redevelopment projects.

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Listen to your gut and don't be afraid to make mistakes."

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

- Director, Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority
- Chair, Fitchburg School Committee
- Advisory Board, Mayors Innovation Project
- Advisory Board, U.S. EPA Local Government Advisory Board
- Co-Chair, Massachusetts Gateway Cities Initiative

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

- State Director, Young Elected Officials Network
- Fellow, Women's Pipeline for Change
- Director, Women's Institute for Housing & Economic Development
- Research Mentor, Global Economics, University of Wyoming
- Founder and Coach, Special Olympics Swim Team

Educational Background

- MA, Economics, Boston University
- BA, Economics and International Relations, Boston University

MICHELLE WU

City Council, City of Boston At-Large

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Asian American



Public Service Highlights

At 28, Michelle Wu became the first Asian American woman elected to the Boston City Council. Running on a platform focused on creating Pipelines to Opportunity through innovative ideas and increasing access to opportunity, Councilor Wu garnered almost 60,000 votes across the city.

She was the lead sponsor in Boston's Paid Parental Leave ordinance and Healthcare Equity ordinance prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity—both of which passed unanimously through the Council and were signed into law by Mayor Martin Walsh.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Committee on Arts & Culture; Special Committee on Small Business; Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Vice Chair, Ways & Means Committee

Rappaport Fellow, Law and Public Policy, Office of Boston Mayor Menino

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Kwong Kow Chinese School

Julie's Family Learning Center

Boston Gay Men's Chorus

WilmerHale Legal Services Center

Medical-Legal Partnership at Boston Medical Center

Statewide Constituency Director, Elizabeth Warren's Senate Campaign

Educational Background

JD, Harvard Law School

BA, Economics, Harvard College

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Be true to yourself and don't feel the need to fit into any box to be a credible candidate and authoritative elected official.”

SANDY ALMONTE

**City Council, Lawrence
District A**

2010-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



HENRIETTA S. EVANS ATTLES*

School Committee, City of Cambridge

1980-1983

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black

First Black woman elected to the Cambridge School Committee

FRANCES COOPER

School Committee, City of Cambridge

1984-1990

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American

RUTH CRUZ

City Council, City of Holyoke Ward 2

1994-1995

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina

DOROTHY MAE DONALSON

Town Council, Barnstable Precinct 8

1991-1994

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American

First woman of color to win a Town Council seat; Founding member of the Barnstable Town Council



MARY H. GOODE

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 10th Suffolk

1975-1978

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American

BARBARA GRESHAM

**School Committee, City of Springfield
District 2/Wards 4 and 5**

2010-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American

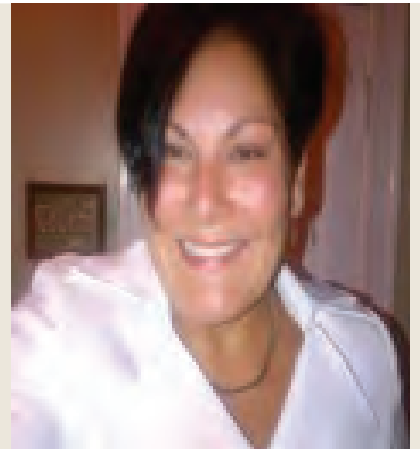


ANA HERNANDEZ

**School Committee, City of Chelsea
District 6**

2010-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



SON HUI MAY

School Committee, Town of Erving

2014-Present

LETICIA ORTIZ

City Council, City of Chelsea

1994-1995

School Committee, City of Chelsea

1991-1993

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican American

DORIS PACHECO-CRUZ

School Committee, Town of Amherst

1990-1993

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican

GILDA RAMIREZ*

School Committee, City of Chelsea

2005

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina

ESTELA REYES

**City Council, Lawrence
District B**

2012-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



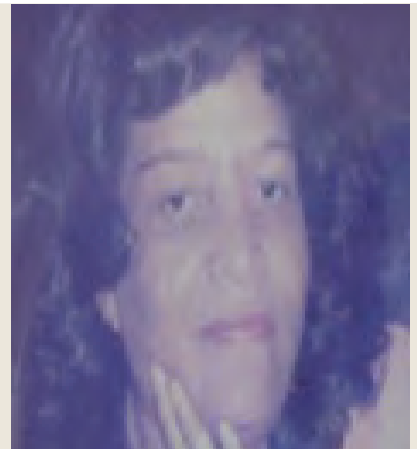
GRACE D. ROMERO*

School Committee, City of Boston

1984-1985

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American and Latina

First Latina elected to office in Massachusetts



MILDRED SANTANA

**City Council, City of Holyoke
Ward 4**

2003*-2005

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina

**Appointed to the council in 2003 prior to being popularly elected*

JULIANNE VANDERHOOP

Board of Selectmen, Town of Aquinnah

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Native American, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head



JEANETTE VELEZ

School Committee, Chelsea District 2

2001-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina

BEVERLY WRIGHT

Board of Selectmen, Town of Aquinnah

2011-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Native American



Methods

Background

This guide developed out of an effort by the Women's Pipeline for Change to identify and highlight women of color elected to office in Massachusetts and to make visible the dimensions and long history of their contributions to the Commonwealth. This initiative culminated in the Pipeline's 2013 celebration event of the public leadership by women of color who served in elected capacity.

The Program Manager of the Women's Pipeline for Change in 2013, Ileana Cintrón, developed the initial database with research assistance from Oiste? The Latino Civic Education Initiative interns and others. In addition to reviewing historical analyses of elections in Massachusetts and obtaining information from individuals familiar with the electoral history of particular cities and towns, Ileana Cintrón utilized several data sources including town and city clerk websites and available histories of governing bodies, the Massachusetts Secretary of State's Office, masslive.com, www.mariaslist.net, and *Latino Politics in Massachusetts: Struggles, Strategies and Prospects* by Carol Hardy-Fanta and Jeffrey Gerson which was published in 2002. Throughout this research process, there was a focus on examining cities and towns with large minority populations and communities of color. Information about the racial/ethnic identity, heritage, and/or descent of women was collected primarily through campaign and elected officials' websites and news publications. Given that the term "women of color" is seen as a valid social scientific category by some and questioned by others, an effort was made to ensure that women of color included in the database identified as such. Therefore, data sources that allowed for self-identification were sought, such as biographies and campaign materials.

This Women's Pipeline for Change database served as the foundation for the development of this guide. The initial database provided to the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy by the Women's Pipeline for Change in 2014 contained the names of the 85 women of color elected, offices held, city/town/district/ward/precinct data, years elected and served, political party, and contact information for most, but not all, of the women. Elected offices covered in the database included town council, city council, mayor, board of aldermen, board of selectmen, school committee, State Senate, House of Representatives, and Sheriff.

Women of Color

The term "women of color" is used in this guide as an inclusive and broad term. While it is a popular and frequently used term used by scholars and activists, it remains controversial in part because there is no consensus about its meaning or its use. One of its common uses in current discourse reflects an intention of empowering women who are underrepresented, invisible, disenfranchised, marginalized, and/or who self-identify as having a diverse racial, ethnic, or immigrant background.

We use "women of color" throughout this guide and as a central identity construct of this project recognizing its limitations and drawbacks. We set out to tell the story of the electoral successes and many contributions made by women who have historically been underrepresented in the policy-making bodies and executive-level public offices across the Commonwealth. We consistently argue that these are women with racially, ethnically, culturally, and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, including those who are immigrants to the United States. We intend for the term to reflect the experiences and perspectives of those who self-identify as women of color while we simultaneously know that this term may not be recognized and/or embraced by all women of diverse backgrounds. Given the very limited nature of current approaches to representing racial/ethnic heritages and/or identities, such as the U.S. Census with its revised and updated categories, we have prioritized self-identification of racial/ethnic background and taken several steps during the research process to ensure that the determination of racial/ethnic identity was made by women themselves. As a result, most of the racial/ethnic information included in the profiles was provided by women in the guide and, for those who could not be reached, we used publically available, credible data sources to make this determination. The primary web-based data sources used for each woman are listed in the Index along with photo credits when photos were not supplied by the women themselves. Since there is no standard collection of data regarding sex, gender identity, or the racial/ethnic background of elected officials through government entities, such information was collected through other sources of information such as biographies available on the Internet and campaign websites.

Data Collection and Analysis

Researchers at the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy used several methods to ensure the accuracy of the data provided in this initial database, fill in the missing data gaps, and expand the dataset to include women of color elected to office after 2013. Researchers used the most recent editions of the Massachusetts Municipal Association Directory, town and city government websites, Massachusetts State Elections Division, and specialized outreach to secretaries of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees to identify women who might self-identify as women of color. The dataset was finalized during the spring of 2015 before most spring and fall municipal elections took place.

In order to collect information to include in the guide, an online survey was administered to all women in the database and semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subsample of women. The research protocol received approval from UMass Boston's Institutional Review Board. Separate consent forms were used for the survey and interview components of the study.

The survey included the following categories/topics: candidacies, elected position(s), community service and leadership, education and employment, family background, electoral success, mentorship, efforts to expand the political pipeline of women of color, and demographic information. Emailed letters of introduction to the project and an invitation to complete the survey were sent out during the spring and summer of 2015 and extensive follow-up was done through several email messages and phone calls to women. Most surveys were completed online but some were done in paper format. There was an overall response rate of approximately 25% and this represents either full or partial completion. Due to missing and/or

accurate contact information (email and/or phone) for women included in the database, it was difficult to achieve a higher response rate even with very extensive outreach. In order to collect information needed for the development of profiles in the guide, researchers engaged in extensive data collection via the internet and produced content for profiles based on information found online. The primary URLs used for each woman listed in the guide may be found in the Index at the end of the guide. Photo credits for photos obtained via the web are also included in the Index. Analysis of survey data was done via coding based on major topics covered in the survey.

Interviews were conducted with 22 women drawn from a sample] based on criteria that allowed for maximum diversity such as geographic location, age, office type, political party, racial/ethnic background, number of candidacies, and significance as a “first.” The women listed below completed recorded interviews either in-person or on the phone lasting from 20-60 minutes. Topics included motivation for seeking elective office, supports/resources, mentoring, challenges/obstacles, building the political pipeline, and advice for aspiring women of color leaders. Most interviews were transcribed and analysis completed after preliminary coding was completed. The interviews served as the basis for the Introduction at the beginning of the guide.

Interviewees included:

- Nilka Alvarez-Rodriguez, City Council, Lawrence, 2000-2005; 2006-2010; 2014-2015
- Shaynah Barnes, City Council, Brockton, 2014-present
- Doris Bunte, Massachusetts House of Representatives, 7th Suffolk, 1973-1985
- Andrea Cabral, Sherriff, Suffolk County, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2004-2013
- Sonia Chang-Díaz, Massachusetts State Senate, 2nd Suffolk t, 2009-present
- Martina Cruz, School Committee, Lawrence, 2006-2011
- Linda Dorcena Forry, Massachusetts State Senate, 1st Suffolk, 2013-present; Massachusetts House of Representatives, 12th Suffolk, 2005-2013
- Jane C. Edmonds, School Committee, Sharon, 1972-1977
- Gloria L. Fox, Massachusetts House of Representatives, 7th Suffolk, 1985-present
- Charlotte Golar Richie, Massachusetts House of Representatives, 5th Suffolk, 1995-1999
- Gladys Lebrón-Martínez, City Council, Holyoke, Ward 1, 2012-present; School Committee, Holyoke, 2004-2011
- Keiko M. Orrall, Massachusetts House of Representatives, 12th Bristol, 2011-present
- Ayanna Pressley, City Council, Boston, 2010-present
- Marta T. Rosa, City Council, Chelsea, 1996-1999; School Committee, Chelsea, 1990-1995
- Amy Mah Sangiolo, Board of Aldermen, Newton, At-Large/Ward 4, 1997-2013
- Denise Simmons, City Council, Cambridge, 2002-present; Mayor, Cambridge, 2008-2009; School Committee, Cambridge, 1992-2001
- Marie St. Fleur, Massachusetts House of Representatives, 5th Suffolk, 1999-2010
- Dianne Wilkerson, Massachusetts State Senate, 2nd Suffolk, 1994-2008
- Jamie Williamson, City Council, Pittsfield, 1996-2000
- Lisa S. Wong, Mayor, Fitchburg, 2008-present
- Beverly Wright, Selectman, Aquinnah, 2011-present
- Michelle Wu, City Council, Boston, 2014-present

Several points of additional information about the profile pages: According to the information we could obtain, five of the women listed in the guide are deceased and their names are marked with an asterisk. Information that is not available is not included and therefore there are some blank sections throughout the guide. Profiles were sent to all women for whom we had current contact information for their feedback, editing, and approval. Given the lack of standardized information available and received, the information contained in the sections “Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service,” and “Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities” do not reference years or current/past positions. Additionally, most committee positions listed under “Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service” relate to the elected position, unless otherwise noted.

While there is a wealth of information contained in this guide, there are limitations to what was available as data sources and what was feasible given the scope of the project. Information related to candidacies and election losses, for instance, was not included due in large part to the survey response rate and limited survey data received. It is the hope of both the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy and the Women’s Pipeline for Change that we will find funding to continue, refine, and expand this critical research on the political leadership of women of color in Massachusetts.

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14	Advani, Rita	www.indianewengland.com/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=60CECAF0782246D3A7AA2EB6048D53C2&nm=Archive&type=Publishing&mod=Publications%3A%3AArticle&mid=8F3A7027421841978F18BE895F87F791&tier=4&id=2E6EBD4903734BC980E938DAC09511E4&AudID=mtvjpnpplslmtqqo www.thesunchronicle.com/gilbert-roe-win-norfolk-school-seats/article_2976d6ef-4cab-51ee-bce7-17c7a7c7a56b.html www.174.143.136.22/ME2/Audiences/dirmod.asp?sid=&nm=&type=Publishing&mod=Publications%3A%3AArticle&mid=8F3A7027421841978F18BE895F87F791&tier=4&id=2E6EBD4903734BC980E938DAC09511E4&AudID=mtvjpnpplslmtqqo
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