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Pathways to Political Leadership for Women of Color Leaders

Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts Boston

Women's Pipeline for Change

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Pathways to Political Leadership for Women of Color Leaders

A Research Partnership between the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy of the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies and the Women's Pipeline for Change

Summary/Abstract

This research partnership was formed to better understand what motivates and sustains—as well as prevents—Asian American women, Latinas, and African American women from achieving greater rates of political leadership in Massachusetts. Five women of color leaders became research fellows and explored pressing issues such as family and cultural expectations, financial resources and fundraising, and the potential for compromised values. After two years of training, data collection, and analysis, online resources were developed and are now hosted on UMass Boston's website.

Goals and Objectives

The specific objectives and intended outcomes of this innovative project were to:

- Document, analyze, and learn from the experiences of women of color active in politics in their communities
- Identify barriers, opportunities, and resources for women of color to run for office and/or serve in other public leadership positions
- Help ensure better utilization of resources to support the public leadership of women of color in Massachusetts
- Generate accessible and dynamic web resources to inform, inspire, and support women of color and allies

Approaches and Methods

Key principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) guided this project which was collaborative, experiential, and change-oriented. This approach provided a unique opportunity for the fellows to:

- Identify a topic they considered important to study
- Design data collection instruments, conduct interviews and focus groups, and engage in journaling and reflective analysis
- Analyze data and develop resources to inform efforts to expand women of color's public leadership

Results/Impacts

The fellows identified several common themes in their interview, focus group, and experiential data. They found that women of color leaders often:

- Negotiate persistent gender and racial inequalities
- Manage cultural/ethnic, family, and community expectations
- Have some unique needs that require more comprehensive support programs

The fellowship experience:

- Provided an opportunity to grow professionally and personally
- Empowered women of color in politics
- Offered a safe space for reflection, sharing, and analysis
- Enhanced their understanding of community needs and shared challenges
- Nurtured the fellows as community activists and political leaders

Conclusion/Next Steps

Resources generated from the project are now at www.umb.edu/pipeline and feature:

- 16 pages of dynamic content, including videos, presentations, project briefs, FLICKR sets, Google map links, and ScholarWorks material
- 3 Spanish videos and 14 videos in total

A strategic dissemination plan targeting dozens of nonprofit, political, academic and philanthropic organizations is underway to ensure widespread distribution, sharing, and use of the resources. *Impact will be measured using web analytics.*

The Fellows



Martina Cruz (Lawrence) | Mayor Lisa Wong (Fitchburg)
Sheneal Parker (Boston) | City Councilor Gladys Lebrón-Martínez (Holyoke)
Elizabeth Cardona (Springfield)

Partnership Information

**WOMEN'S
PIPELINE
FOR CHANGE**



Delia Rodriguez-Masjoan

Director, Women's Pipeline for Change
617.723.6866 | drm@pipelineforchange.us

