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

MAY 2021



CENTER FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY
McCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF POLICY AND GLOBAL STUDIES



**MASSACHUSETTS WOMEN
OF COLOR COALITION**

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

The Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the McCormack Graduate School works to advance women's public leadership and the public policies that make a difference in the lives of women, particularly low-income women and women of color. Through its award-winning graduate certificate program, policy-relevant research, and public forums, it works to ensure that the voices, expertise, and experiences of women are valued and included in civic discourse and the policymaking process. Utilizing both an antiracist and intersectional approach, addressing ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, immigrant status, and other identities, the center works across sectors, including health, education, and employment, among others, to increase access and opportunity for women and families and inform policy analysis to ensure economic, social, and political equity and justice for all.

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Twitter: [@CWPPP_UMB](https://twitter.com/CWPPP_UMB).

Acknowledgements

We offer sincere appreciation for the courageous and bold women of color who were determined and motivated to run for and serve in office. Their incredible leadership and public service contributions highlighted in this publication are important to acknowledge both now and for decades to come. We thank them for taking time out of their busy schedules to respond to requests for information, particularly given the challenges of the past year. It is their stories and insights that will inspire others to take on public leadership roles, and for that, we remain extremely grateful.

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It's important to note that this 2021 publication builds on the leadership of former Center Director Ann Bookman and the foundational work of a remarkable team comprised of graduate and undergraduate students from UMass Boston who are now alumnae of the university: Rose Adhiambo Nyaondo, Ana María Sánchez Rodríguez, Anny N. Rodríguez Viloría, Helena J. Berbano, Michelle Chouinard, and Muqaddisa Mehreen as well as former center research assistant Jessica Toglia. This team was greatly enhanced by the work of two wonderful interns from the Women's Pipeline for Change, Jasmine Lee and Ruthann Leverett. In addition, we recognize the contributions of Devika (Deika) Albert, Jessie Azong, and Brian Beauregard. We offer a special thank you to Ileana Cintrón and acknowledge her pioneering work to develop the initial dataset that served as the foundation for the profiles. Her substantial contributions endure in these pages. We also acknowledge the deep partnership with the Women's Pipeline for Change that made the first edition of this publication possible and recognize in particular Joyce Ferriabough Bolling, Cheryl Clyburn Crawford, and Suzanne Lee as steering committee members for the Women's Pipeline for Change, as well as all of the others who launched and sustained the Women's Pipeline for Change over the years.

Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson, PhD, MPH, MA and Christa Kelleher, PhD

We mourn the loss of Doris Bunte (1933-2021), the first Black woman elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and one of the first women of color ever to be elected in the Commonwealth. A trailblazer and accomplished legislator, Doris served as a mentor to many of the women of color featured in this publication.

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INTRODUCTION

Ensuring diverse racial, ethnic, and gender representation at all levels of government in the United States is critical to a well-functioning, responsive democracy. Further, electing more women from currently underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds will likely affect policy agendas, and indeed policy solutions, as women of color leaders are more likely to bring the needs and concerns of underserved communities and constituencies to policymaking tables (Brown and Gershon 2016; Hardy-Fanta et al. 2016).

A growing body of research addresses the importance of understanding how women of color make a difference through their political leadership. Studies show that racial and ethnic identity as well as gender, and other aspects of identity, intersect to give women of color unique perspectives as officeholders (Brown and Gershon 2016; Dittmar 2020; Garcia et al. 2014; Smooth 2010). As demonstrated by the profiles in this publication, women of color elected to office in Massachusetts have brought to policymaking tables perspectives and agendas that have influenced what issues and proposed solutions move forward and had transformational effects on various levels of government.

In 2015, UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy released the first-ever publication exploring the elected leadership of women of color in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts largely to make known the contributions made by female electeds of color across the Commonwealth. The publication also aimed to delve into what hinders and what facilitates the elected leadership of women of color.

As was the case then, it is important to acknowledge the multiple and sometimes seemingly contradictory narratives about the leadership of women of color in Massachusetts electoral politics. As was noted in the introductory essay in 2015, "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." But as Ann Bookman and Christa Kelleher explained at the time, "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" (Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy 2015).

It remains ever important to simultaneously recognize the strengths, talents, contributions, and service of women of color as so many step up and into elected positions of public leadership and confront the reality that women of color remain untapped and overlooked with minimal or no representation on many policymaking bodies and in key elected positions across the Commonwealth.

What has transpired in the last half decade as we consider the many women of color who have been elected for the first time, re-elected to office, gone on to higher office, and taken on new leadership roles both in and outside the electoral arena, including appointed and nonprofit positions? More women of color have launched campaigns to secure seats at the table in local, county, state, and federal policymaking bodies. Women of color have sought key offices, from Mayor to District Attorney to Sheriff. Breakthrough victories have occurred and biased narratives about what politicians should look like have been challenged and dispelled. Since 2015, women of color have been both trailblazers in districts and communities that have never had leadership by women of color and followed in the paths cleared by women of color who had achieved electoral victories years or, in some cases, decades earlier. And, as reflected in the profiles that follow, women of color are leading the way on challenges facing the municipalities and districts they serve. They are influencing the agenda-setting process and proposing and championing measures to address both long-term, often-neglected issues as well as emergent ones.

Shared Experiences Amidst Tremendous Diversity

During interviews with 22 women of color featured in the inaugural edition of this publication, it became clear that there were shared perspectives and experiences even with the incredible diversity of women themselves, their communities, electoral districts, and individual paths to office. The women interviewed offered insights on what it meant to seek elective office when they did, what motivated them, what barriers they confronted and supports they received, and what they foresaw on the road to women of color in political leadership in Massachusetts. As evidenced in these interviews, their reflections endure and remain salient today. Many of them reflected on what drove them to seek elective office such as the need to address a key social, economic, or political issue(s) about which they were concerned, the lack of voice or representation for women of color and communities of color, and/or a strong commitment to serving the public and working on behalf of their communities. The underlying themes of community need and public service were summarized well by one woman elected in the late 1980s who explained her own journey: "I was an advocate first, an activist second, and a political person third." It was clear from their discussion that a range of key supports made a difference to their elected leadership, mentors, family members and close friends, as well as grassroots network of supporters. For instance, whether mentors were people they knew personally, or only knew by reputation, most women cited how mentors played a significant role during their journeys to office and while in office. As one woman explained, mentors are "people who have opened doors and paths and who have gone through what you are about to go through." Further, 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 necessarily on board at the outset. Yet some women noted that grassroots support was not enough in and of itself. For one woman it was important to "...seek support from people who have influence."

The women interviewed cited multiple paths to becoming an elected official, but several commonalities emerged from the narratives they offered. Many of the women 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. Yet it's clear that, for many women, the obstacles they faced in their bids for office were formidable and connected to their racial, ethnic, gender and, in some cases, 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.” Institutional and cultural factors had an influence. As one woman recalled: “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.” 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 (if any) salary 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.

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 challenges 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.” According to the interviews conducted in preparation for the 2015 guide, the need to be deliberate, strategic, and proactive was emphasized by several women who maintained that building the political pipeline would take work. What can we say about the political pipeline six years later?

50 YEARS OF ELECTED LEADERSHIP: AN ACTIVE AND EXPANDING PIPELINE

In total, 174 women of color have been elected to key policymaking positions across the Commonwealth starting in 1971 when Sandra Graham was elected to the Cambridge City Council followed by Jane Edmonds who was elected to the Sharon School Committee early in 1972.

There have been notable advances in the elected leadership of women of color over the past six years in the Commonwealth. According to available data, while acknowledging that the numbers provided here may not be capturing all of the women of color who have been elected given the challenge of collecting such information, 88 women of color currently hold elected office across the state. This represents an 83% increase from 2015, when this publication was first released and 48 women of color were in office that year.

Office	Number of Women of Color Elected to the Office	Percent of Women of Color Elected to the Office
School Committee	85	44.5%
Local Governing Body	74	38.7%
MA House of Representatives	21	11.1%
Mayor	5	2.6%
MA Senate	3	1.6%
District Attorney	1	0.5%
Sheriff	1	0.5%
U.S. Congress	1	0.5%
Total	191	100%

Notes: Local governing bodies refer to main policymaking bodies in municipalities, including city council, select board (board of aldermen/selectmen), and town council. With some women of color elected to more than one office, N (N=191) totals more than number of electeds (N=174).

Municipal Office

The vast majority (87%) of the 174 women of color who have been elected in the Commonwealth have been elected at the local level (with four of these women serving in another, nonmunicipal elective office). These women have played critically important roles on local governing bodies, school committees, and at the helm as mayor. One hundred fifty two women of color have been elected to serve in municipal offices such as mayor, city council, board of aldermen, select board, and school committee. Fifteen women of color have served in two offices and one has served in three offices (Cambridge’s Denise Simmons).

As shown in Table 1, school committee has been the most common office held by women of color over the last half decade. More women of color (N=85) have served on school committees compared to local governing bodies such as city council and select board (N=74), as defined in Table 1, with nine women of color elected to both offices over their political career. Only five women of color have ever served as mayor in the Commonwealth, with two female mayors of color popularly elected, indicating that very few women of color have served in this chief executive role in Massachusetts.

Boston, the capital city of Massachusetts, has experienced significant changes in the electoral landscape over the past few years. Last year marked a shift in the composition of the 13-member Boston City Council when six women of color were sworn into office, including the first Afro-Latina, an immigrant of color. The majority of Boston City Council seats are held by women and persons of color, making it the most diverse City Council in the city’s history. The first woman and person of color to serve as Mayor, Kim Janey, was sworn in as Acting Mayor in March 2021, and the current field of six mayoral candidates includes four women of color.

State Legislature

The Massachusetts Legislature has existed since 1780 and the General Court, as it is called, is currently comprised of 40 senators and 160 representatives (Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators 2021). According to the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators, more than 20,000 men have served as legislators, yet only 23 women of color have ever been elected as State Representatives and/or State Senators. In 2015, only four women of color held seats in the legislature but there has been a significant increase in the rate of officeholding since then. At present, nine legislators are women of color—one in the Senate, Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz, and eight in the House.

County Offices and Governor’s Council

Only two women of color have been elected to the most critical law enforcement positions at the county level in Massachusetts. Andrea Cabral was the first and only woman of color to be elected Suffolk County Sheriff and Rachael Rollins is the first woman—and first woman of color—elected as Suffolk County District Attorney and first woman of color to be elected Suffolk District Attorney. No women of color have been elected to the Governor’s Council.

Statewide Office and Congress

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has only recently seen the election of a woman of color to Congress, with the 2018 election of Ayanna Pressley (MA-7th). No women of color have been elected to statewide office (Treasurer and Receiver General, Secretary of State, Attorney General, Lieutenant Governor, or Governor) or to the U.S. Senate.

Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds

As demonstrated in Table 2, the women of color who have been elected to office in the Commonwealth come from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, with 12% of the women of color either self-identifying with more than one race and/or ethnicity or identifying as multi-ethnic or mixed race. For the 21 women of color with multi-racial/multi-ethnic backgrounds, approximately one-third identified as Latina, such as Dominican or Puerto Rican. Nine self-identified as Black or African American, three as Cape Verdean, and three as Native American or American Indian as part of their racial/ethnic background.

Racial and Ethnic Background	Women of Color Electeds, 1972-2021	Women of Color Electeds, Currently in Office
Black or African American	61	28
Latina or Hispanic	57	21
Asian American	32	19
Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Racial	21	18
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	1
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	0	0
Middle-Eastern/North African	1	1
Total	174	88

Note: Self-identified racial and ethnic data were aggregated into broader categories using primarily U.S. census categories with the addition of Middle-Eastern/North African, with the recognition that census categories are limiting and some racial and ethnic identities do not fit within these prescribed categories. Brazilians are not included in the Latina or Hispanic category; they are included in the Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Racial category. Multi-ethnic/multi-racial includes women whose self-identified racial and/or ethnic background spanned more than one aggregate category listed above, or who identified as multi-ethnic or mixed race. Women who identify with more than one race and ethnicity are included under the multi-ethnic/multi-racial category and are not included or counted in aggregate categories above but are included in snapshots on the racial and ethnic backgrounds of women of color electeds in the narrative below.

Black and African American Women

Black women have been a powerful and vital force in the shaping of the political terrain in Massachusetts (Levine et al. 2019). With a long history of activism and leadership in Massachusetts politics and, while approximately one-third of elected Black female leaders have come from Boston, many communities have had Black women in key elected positions. In fact, the communities to first have women of color in local office elected

African American women (Saundra Graham to the Cambridge City Council in 1971 and Jane Edmonds to the Sharon School Committee in 1972). Since then an estimated 72 Black and African American women have been elected to office in Massachusetts, which includes eleven Black women whose racial background is multi-racial/multi-ethnic. In particular, Black women have made significant strides in Massachusetts politics over the past few election cycles at several levels of government, with the election of Yvonne Spicer, the first African American woman popularly elected Mayor, Rachael Rollins elected as the first Black woman in the role of District Attorney, and Ayanna Pressley, the state's first Black woman elected to Congress. At present, 30 Black and African American women, which includes 11 women of multi-racial/multi-ethnic backgrounds, serve in municipal level office, with two as mayor, 14 on local governing bodies, and 14 on school committees. In the legislature, four Black women serve in the House.

Latinas and Hispanic Women

Latinas have been a consistent force behind civic and political participation in their communities, engaging in political education and voter mobilization, organizing their communities around social change, and running for office. An African American and Latina (Black Hispanic, according to the U.S. Census) woman, Grace Romero became the first Latina elected to office in Massachusetts, winning a seat on the Boston School Committee in 1983. Since then, an estimated 62 Latinas have been elected to office in Massachusetts (this figure includes Latinas as well as women whose self-identification reflected Latina background as well as other racial/ethnic identities who are listed in Table 2 as multi-racial/multi-ethnic). Over the past few years, Latinas have started to make notable electoral gains in cities across Massachusetts. The number of Latinas serving in local office today (N=21), along with seven multi-racial/multi-ethnic women who are Latina, increased slightly over the past six years (17 were serving in 2015). Since 2017, Latinas have experienced the largest increase in representation in city council office-holding compared to other women of color of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. A number of these elections represented historic strides, with several Latinas becoming the first Latina in their community to have a seat on the city council. It's equally important to acknowledge the increase of political representation among Afro-Latinas. For instance, in 2020, Julia Mejia became the first Afro-Latina elected to the Boston City Council. Even with noted increases, Latinas have not made similar gains in the state legislature nor in other key offices across the Commonwealth.

Asian American Women

Similarly, Asian American women have been civically engaged in various ways that range from community-based organizing to running for elected office. According to available data, thirty women of Asian descent have been elected to office in Massachusetts. More Asian American women have been elected at the local level (N=24) than at the state level (N=6), with Terry Kwan as the first Asian American woman elected to office in 1984 (Brookline School Committee). Twelve Asian women have been elected to local governing bodies and 11 to school committees. Lisa Wong has been the only Asian American female mayor in the Commonwealth. At present, four Asian women serve in the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Sonia Chang-Díaz, a woman of Asian descent who identifies as multi-ethnic, serves in the State Senate. Women of Asian descent have not served in statewide office, as a member of Congress, or in roles of District Attorney, Sheriff, or Governor's Councilor in Massachusetts.

Native/Indigenous Women

Before settler colonialism demoted matrilineal traditions, Native/Indigenous women across the Americas held important positions of leadership in their tribes and also took on critical advocacy and activism roles outside of the formal tribal systems (Peters 2021). Today, Native women across Massachusetts continue that tradition serving and contributing to tribal governance.

Recognizing that tribal leadership roles span councils and include more than the top position in a tribe, the following offers a snapshot of women serving in key posts in the tribes that cover Massachusetts:

- Jessie Little Doe Baird, Vice-chair of Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe;
- Cheryl Andrews-Maltais, Chair of Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah);
- Chief Cheryll Holley, Nipmuc Nation;
- Elizabeth Solomon, Treasurer, Massachusetts at Ponkapoag's Tribal Council;
- Alma Gordon, Tribal President, Chappaquiddick Tribe of Wampanoag Nation;
- Melissa Harding Ferretti, Tribal Chair, Herring Pond Tribe;
- Eva Blake and Sue Roderick of Assonet Band of Wampanoag Nation;
- Kristen Wyman and Maria Turner, Natick/Nipmuc;
- Megan Page, Pocasset Tribe, Wampanoag Nation;
- Rosita Caring Hands Silva, Natick Praying Indians

(Dunn 2021; Peters 2021; Woods 2021)

Currently, only one woman with tribal affiliation, Juli Vanderhoop of the Wampanoag Gay Head tribe, currently serves in local office, with two others self-identifying as Native American or American Indian in addition to another racial or ethnic category holding local elected positions.

Multi-Ethnic and Multi-Racial Women of Color

The backgrounds of multi-ethnic and multi-racial women of color are important to recognize and honor as they reflect intersecting and complex identities that are unique to each individual.

One of the themes that comes through the collection of biographical profiles presented in this publication is the significance of lived experiences for women of color—and how their experiences have been shaped by their racial and ethnic backgrounds, in combination with being female (identified), along with other aspects of their identity. The intersectionality of women of color and the many facets of their identity—whether related to their linguistic, cultural, or religious background, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, social class, family context, or other aspects of identity—is critical to understanding the perspectives and experiences that women of color bring to their public leadership roles. Attention to varied experiences of women of color based on historical and cultural contexts, in addition to other factors, is deemed critical by some scholars of the elected leadership of women of color (Matos et al. 2015; Smooth 2010; Swain 2017). As Swain asserts, “an intersectional approach begins to move us toward an examination of the ways in which intersecting identities produce experiences in political officeholding” that are different from the experiences of dominant groups of officeholders (Swain 2017, p.132). The interplay between a woman of color’s identity and her experiences both becoming and being a political leader deserves in-depth analysis in order to grow the pipeline of women of color and address needs and challenges that face women of color.

Historic Gains and Upward Trends, Yet Persistent Underrepresentation

Evident in the profiles that follow is the centrality of community and advocacy for women of color who make a bid and secure elective office. Responding to a community need, an unaddressed problem, or a lack of leadership drove many women of color to seek office in order to make a difference in the cities, towns, and districts they represent. For those in nonmunicipal positions, the concept of community is just as paramount to many female electeds of color as they work toward solutions to issues that they have championed onto the political agenda.

However, it’s clear while there is a growing trend of women of color being elected to seats and in municipalities where women of color have not historically held positions of elected leadership, there are persistent gaps in representation across the Commonwealth which has 351 cities and towns. Twenty-eight cities and towns have had one woman of color elected to office (local, county, or state legislative) and the majority (N=15) of these communities had their first woman of color come into office between 2016 and the present. Twenty-four municipalities have had more than one woman of color elected to office. While most county offices such as District and Sheriff, state legislative seats, and the 7th Congressional district cover multiple municipalities, the reality is that close to 300 cities and towns have never had a woman of color elected at the local level and the vast majority of these 300 communities have never had a woman of color serve in a key elected office at any level of government.

Table 3. Top 12 Municipalities Represented by Women of Color, 1972-2021

Municipality	Number of Women of Color Elected from Municipality
Boston	27
Chelsea	15
Lawrence	15
Springfield	11
Cambridge	10
Holyoke	9
Randolph	7
Amherst	7
Newton	5
Brockton	4
Framingham	4
Salem	4
Total	118

Note: Data based on women of color elected from the community listed, including local, state legislative office, sheriff, district attorney, and U.S. Congress. For county and state legislative offices, the largest city is used in the breakdown presented here.

As demonstrated in Table 3, Boston, Chelsea, and Lawrence are the cities that have had the most women of color elected at any level of office. The majority of the top dozen municipalities that have had the highest number of women of color elected are cities, with most of the cities home to a large number of Latinx residents.

Still, many municipalities with large communities of nonwhite residents have elected very few women of color to office, such as Everett, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Methuen, Quincy, Somerville, and Worcester, or no women of color, such as Revere and Waltham. It's important to note that Lowell and Worcester are communities that have historically maintained a system of at-large, rather than district seats—resulting in few or no nonwhite candidates gaining seats which may have prevented more women of color from running and/or winning seats in those cities. The shift to district seats in both communities may lead to more women of color elected to local office.

Table 4. Initial Year in Office, by Decade, Women of Color Electeds in Massachusetts	
Decade	Number (Percent) of Women of Color Elected in MA
1970-1979	4 (2.3%)
1980-1989	11 (6.3%)
1990-1999	21 (12.1%)
2000-2009	31 (17.8%)
2020-2019	88 (50.6%)
2020-present	19 (10.9%)
Total	174 (100%)

The increased number of women of color in elected leadership in Massachusetts, especially over the past dozen years, seems to reflect a shift toward parity and diversity in political leadership in many communities and districts across the state. Table 4 indicates an upward trend with a relatively high number of women of color serving in office over the past few years when considering the decade breakdown of the initial year in office for women of color electeds. Yet there may need to be an acceleration in the growth of political leadership to ensure that governing bodies at all levels and executive-level offices, such as statewide constitutional offices as well as mayor, district attorney and sheriff are taken up by women of color at rates that more closely mirror the ethnic and racial diversity of female-identifying populations in the Commonwealth.

Achieving Parity and Diversity in Political Leadership: What Will it Take?

What is driving the increase in officeholding by women of color in Massachusetts? What supportive factors would help assure that more women of color serve in public leadership positions in the years to come?

While the center does not engage in candidate tracking research, it seems that more women of color are stepping up to run for office, perhaps than ever before. Further, it appears that female candidates of color have had higher win rates over the past few election cycles—at both the local and state levels—than in previous cycles. The changing political landscape in Massachusetts with more women of color stepping up to run mirrors national trends of increased numbers of women making bids for office at the federal and state levels.

Following the 2016 presidential election, there have been record-breaking increases in the number of women running for office at state and federal levels of government (Dittmar 2019). These increases continued through the 2020 election cycle yet ongoing gender and intersectional power differences remain at play in American campaigns (Dittmar 2021). While there are limited data sources on women of color candidates at township, municipal, and county governments in the United States, there is strong indication from recruitment and training programs that women of color are running for office at higher numbers, and in places where they may be the first woman of color to run and/or be victorious (The 19th 2020).

It's clear that the increased availability of recruitment and training programs for women, with some programs specifically focused on women of color, New Americans, and young women, have made a difference when it comes to noted shifts in candidacies of women of color and win rates. For example, programs and initiatives have been launched in Massachusetts by the Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition (MAWOCC), Amplify Latinx, Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus, Political Lab, Asian American Women's Political Initiative (AAWPI), Ignite, and Emerge-Massachusetts. Some of these organizations are state affiliates or members of national organizations. There are also national groups focused on electing women of color, such as Higher Heights for America which works to elect Black women. In addition, given both long-established and more recent political support entities such as political action committees (PACs) and other recruitment, training, and support programs that prioritize underrepresented populations, women of color increasingly have access to key resources.

As a result, the political landscape in Massachusetts has undergone notable shifts—not only from the growth in resources available for women

of color, but due to heightened attention to the gender, racial, and ethnic gaps in electoral leadership and efforts to bring varied experiences and perspectives to policymaking tables. However, it's necessary to acknowledge that local contexts and conditions are important considerations in electoral politics. Any exploration of what has shaped the advancement of women of color in elected policymaking roles in Massachusetts and what will facilitate more robust and enduring progress going forward must take into account what is happening at the local level as well as across the Commonwealth. This may include documenting who considers a bid for office to who runs for office to which candidates succeed in securing elected policymaking roles. It's also important to consider the populations of communities and population trends over time, histories and herstories of community organizing and elected leadership—including the existence of role models and mentors, electoral systems and structures (such as ranked choice voting, redistricting, district seat configurations, and voting options), voter expansion and voting patterns, available media and communications outlets, as well as the constellation and extent of resources and supports for potential and declared candidates as well as well as voter mobilization efforts. Additionally, it's necessary to examine how the political landscape itself is being altered by women of color stepping into political leadership in ways that confront long-term, systemic barriers to elected office and promote nontraditional campaigning, whether that means emphasizing unpaid media opportunities, expanding voter bases in innovative ways, growing multi-racial bases of support, and/or challenging conventional fundraising metrics and approaches.

The analysis of the political leadership of Massachusetts women of color to date offered in this introduction may be deepened with additional research on the factors that facilitate and those that hinder the advancement of women of color and such in-depth research must address local considerations in addition to broader, statewide, and national conditions. The profiles generated for this publication and the quantitative analysis made possible through aggregate data drawn from the profiles allow for a preliminary, yet cursory, exploration of challenges, strategies, and resources related to the election and leadership of women of color in the Commonwealth.

Nonetheless, the profiles provide a glimpse into the personal and professional backgrounds of women of color who have been transformative forces in their communities, districts, and in Massachusetts over the decades. This updated publication offers a window to begin to acknowledge the many ways that women of color have made a difference in public leadership roles. From the election of early trailblazers in the early 1970s to those sworn in earlier this year, it's clear that the women featured in this publication come to public service with a range of priorities but many explicitly call for transparency and accountability in governance, particularly on behalf of underserved and/or marginalized populations.

Ensuring that all community members have a voice and helping to create and implement mechanisms for meaningful community engagement reflect the intentionality of women of color leaders to effect an inclusive and responsive government. Closing disparities in housing, healthcare, education, workforce, and economic development are themes reflected across many of the profiles. Many of the women of color electeds prioritize equitable distribution of resources among residents. For instance, several women of color cite housing and economic development initiatives as well as increased and equitable access to education services among their proudest achievements. The impact that they have had when it comes to this intention, and so many others, is just one indication of how important the leadership of women of color is at all levels of government. Even in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the disproportionate effects on women of color, the zeal for community building and systematic changes through policy has been amplified (Levine et al. 2019). Women of color leaders in Massachusetts are reimagining and constructing progressive policies related to the economy, labor, education, health, and other systems that work for, instead of against, women of color, which is long overdue.

There is much more to learn from the women of color who have been elected to date, as well as those who have run for office but were not victorious, and those who have yet to run but will step up in the months and years to come. The profiles that follow demonstrate just how important it is to center the experiences and journeys of women of color leaders as the political landscape in Massachusetts continues to shift toward a more inclusive and truly representational system of governance.

Co-Authors:

Ijeoma D. Anyanwu
Christa Kelleher
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Bianca Ortiz-Wythe
Sara Saltzer



JANET ADACHI

Select Board, Town of Acton

2010-2019

Racial/Ethnic Background: Japanese American



Public Service Highlights

First elected to office in 2010, Janet Adachi served three 3-year terms on the Board of Selectmen and retired in 2019. She was Chairman twice (2013-2014 and 2017-2018) and also served twice as Clerk and as Vice Chairman. She worked on a broad range of issues, including extensively on issues related to affordable housing and vocational-technical education, with one highlight being her work on the years-long and ultimately successful effort to reconfigure the Minuteman Regional Vocational-Technical High School District and secure district-wide approval for a much-needed new school building, which opened in the fall of 2019.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Current Chairman, Acton Community Housing Corporation

Public Sector Member, 495/Metrowest Partnership Board of Directors*

Member, Acton Community Preservation Committee*

Member, Acton Conservation Commission*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Acton Area League of Women Voters Steering Committee

Member, Acton Housing for All

Member, Acton and Boxborough Diversity Coalition*

Educational Background

JD Boston College Law School

AB Harvard University (Radcliffe College)

Current Position

Retired

In Her Own Words

“Serving the public is a high calling and the efforts of elected officials really can make a positive difference in the lives of their constituents. There’s no magic formula for being effective: be your best self, work hard and do your homework, keep listening and learning, develop a thick skin, and have a sense of humor.”

GERLY ADRIEN

City Council, City of Everett At-Large

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Haitian-American/Black



Public Service Highlights

Elected to the Everett City Council in 2019, Councilor Adrien is a tenacious and diligent professional who is compassionate about people and passionate about service. She knows that fighting for fairness means ensuring individuals and families have access to the resources they need to have a better life. A youth organizer at Teen Empowerment, she helped create positive, impactful events for the youth of Somerville, and worked as a summer intern at the Somerville Community Corporation, where she learned first-hand the importance of affordable housing. While working towards her Bachelor of Science Degree in Management, she continued her volunteer service as an English teacher for a local enrichment program and as a kindergarten teacher's aide at a public school in Waltham, and in Ghana where she taught English to orphans.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Ways and Means; Legislative Affairs and Elections Committees

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Everett Black History Essay High School Scholarship

Board Member, The Brooklyn Steppers*

Educational Background

MBA, Boston University

BS, Bentley University Questrom School of Business

Current Position

Owner, Tipping Cow Ice Cream Shop

Grants Manager, Boston University's Medical Center's Hematology and Oncology Section

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Politics is not easy. But it is worth it to make REAL changes for the causes, the people and the solutions you care about. Step in the fight."

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!”

YESSENIA ALFARO-ALVAREZ

School Committee, City of Chelsea

2016-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

First elected in 2015, School Committee Member Yessenia Alfaro-Alvarez has worked on issues related to immigration, education, and social justice. She has advocated for lifting the cap on Massachusetts charter schools. She has worked to increase the Chelsea public school budget and also toward the hiring of a new school superintendent in 2019.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Subcommittee on Curriculum and Instruction Member,
Budget and Finance Subcommittee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Deputy Director, Chelsea Collaborative*

Director of Organizing, Social Economic Justice Department at the
Chelsea Collaborative*

Educational Background

AA, Bunker Hill Community College

Current Position

Community Engagement Director, Chelsea Collaborative

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“As an immigrant woman of color I learned that we carry a lot of labels. However, being a woman of color and an immigrant it only shows the strong resilience we all have. We are strong fighters to protect our traditions, race, cultures, and traditions. But at the end of all these labels, we should feel the greatness of GOD for the gift of life.

Always look inside you whenever things do not feel right. And trust your true self to make things right. GOD has placed you in this world for a purpose that needs to be fulfilled and each obstacle in life is only helping to lead us toward that purpose of life.”

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

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

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black



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

2010-2015

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 served 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

Board Member, Hispanic Week*

Educational Background

Business Administration, Cambridge College

Current Position

Owner, D'Todo

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“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.”

SHALINI BAHL-MILNE

Town Council, Town of Amherst District 5

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Asian Indian/South Asian



Public Service Highlights

Elected to the first Amherst Town Council in 2018, Shalini Bahl-Milne is the only person of color on the 13-member council. Drawing from her work using a human-centered approach and mindfulness-based thinking, she seeks to create inclusive policies and processes to engage all stakeholders. Since being elected, Councilor Bahl-Milne sponsored the bylaw prohibiting the use of wild and exotic animals for entertainment and co-sponsored the resolution initiated by residents to affirm the town's commitment to end structural racism and achieve racial equity for Black residents. As part of that commitment, she worked with a fellow councilor to organize an anti-racism training for the Town Council and Town Manager. She is creating a community engagement plan to engage all stakeholders at different stages of policy development so people's lived experiences and ideas are incorporated into the policies impacting them. She was the lead author for the paper, "Mindfulness: Its Transformative Potential for Consumer, Societal, and Environmental Well-Being," which was awarded the 2019 Journal of Public Policy & Marketing award by the American Marketing Association.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice-Chair, Community Resources Committee

Member, Finance Committee; Adhoc Committee for Rules and Procedures*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Mindfulness-based workshops in schools, colleges, and community

Educational Background

PhD, UMass Amherst

Chartered Accountancy, Indian Institute of Chartered Accountants

Bachelor of Commerce, Lady ShriRam College, Delhi University, India

Current Position

Founder and Mindfulness Consultant, Know Your Mind LLC

In Her Own Words

"I realized that if I want a different world that's inclusive and equitable, I need to be part of the leadership that makes policies that can address systemic inequities. What makes it possible for me to walk on this path is having the right kind of support system of advisers, mentors, and allies, and a mindset that's compassionate and resilient."

SHAYNAH BARNES MONROE

City Council, City of Brockton

2014-2017

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

In 2013, Shaynah Barnes was elected as the first African American female City Councilor-at-Large in Brockton. She was re-elected in 2015 and served two terms during which time she drafted a city ordinance to reinstate the defunct Commission on Women's Issues. Shaynah also proposed adult learning curriculum to the Community Schools Committee in hopes of increasing literacy and education achievement in the city. In 2000, Shaynah was initiated into the Norfolk-Plymouth County Area Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and has served as a featured panelist for various women in politics symposia, including those hosted by the Boston Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta and the Women's Pipeline for Change. In 2014, Shaynah was selected the first member of the Brockton City Council to represent the city in Israel on a study tour with the Jewish Community Relations Council of Boston. While there, she started dialog with the legislative bodies and business communities of Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv. A member in good standing at Mouth Moriah Baptist Church in Brockton, Shaynah has served in several ministries in the church.

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"I am sick and tired of being sick and tired."

-Fannie Lou Hamer

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Plymouth County District Attorney's Office*

Victim Witness Advocate, Massachusetts Department of Youth Services*

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

Member, Accounts; Community Schools; Finance; Real Estate; Public Safety Committees (Brockton City Council)*

Member, Plymouth County Commissioner's Advisory Board*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, United Way of Greater Plymouth County; Family and Community Services; Brockton Day Nursery; Old Colony YMCA

Voting Delegate, Massachusetts Democratic Caucus

Educational Background

BS, Northeastern University

Current Position

Immigration Specialist, Brockton District Office of Congressman Stephen Lynch

*Denotes former role

MANISHA BEWTRA

City Council, City of Melrose

2018-2019

Racial/Ethnic Background: Indian American



TDM Photography

Public Service Highlights

In 2017, Manisha Bewtra was elected Melrose City Councilor, making her the first person of color to hold elected office in the city. During her tenure, she applied her expertise in city planning and community development to the variety of issues that came before the Council. In 2019, Bewtra ran for Mayor of Melrose, offering a vision for an inclusive, accountable, and equitable systems-oriented local government. Although she didn't win, her historic candidacy demonstrated the importance of stepping up to run and serve in an executive capacity. In her campaigns for Councilor and Mayor, and while serving in office, she engaged people of all ages and demographics and inspired more diverse voter participation.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Community Representative, Melrose Veterans Memorial Middle School Site Council

Steering Committee Member, Mel King Institute Alliance for Racial Equity

Invited Participant, ULI Boston/New England Urban Plan Public Leadership Institute

Vice Chair, Melrose Human Rights Commission

Planner, Massachusetts Housing Partnership; Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Senior Associate, Beacon Leadership Collaborative

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Alumnae, Emerge Massachusetts; Initiative for Diversity in Civic Leadership; Massachusetts Commonwealth Seminar

Urban Planning Studio Instructor and Design Critic, Harvard Graduate School of Design

Member, American Institute of Certified Planners

Educational Background

MCP, University of Pennsylvania

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Find the people who will support you and keep your morale up because your voice is needed, and that support system will keep you empowered when you're speaking up in a room where you're offering a unique perspective. Usually, there are others without that podium who will appreciate the representation you are bringing to issues close to their hearts. Believe this, because it's true: your lived experience as a woman of color is valuable, and you're inspiring to others who look up to you!”

MEENAKSHI BHARATH

School Committee, Town of Hopkinton

2017-2020

Racial/Ethnic Background: American of Indian heritage



Public Service Highlights

After spending more than a decade in the corporate world, Meena Bharath become extensively involved in education and educational policy in the town of Hopkinton and on the state level. She was elected to the town's School Committee in 2017 where she served one term as Chair. She actively participated in the hiring process of new superintendent and was involved in advocating for and supporting diversity and inclusion initiatives, including training for school leadership. She initiated the creation of the Community Communications group to open dialogue and collaboration across schools, town departments, and community organizations.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Commissioner, Asian American Commission of Massachusetts

Chair, Education Committee

Chair, Gifted and Talented Advisory Council

Co-Chair, Education Models Sub-Committee

Chair, Hopkinton School Committee*

Board Member, The Education Collaborative (TEC)*

Board Member, (Boston) Marathon Fund Committee*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Math Tutor, Framingham Homework Center*

Educational Background

BS, Bapatla College of Arts and Sciences

In Her Own Words

“Community building is hard work and tests you in many ways. One must listen humbly and act courageously. There are times when I have felt alone and let down. In such times, I have looked for inspiration in role models and sought mentors and read and made time for self-care. While challenging, nothing is more invigorating than lending a hand to build a more meaningful, just world.”

MANIIKA BOWMAN

School Committee, City of Cambridge

2016-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

School Committee Member Manikka Bowman was named a Boston Business Journal's 40 under 40 Honoree in 2018. She spearheaded the effort to expand access to sanitary hygiene in all Cambridge Public schools and worked to ensure that the budgetary process is directly connected to a multi-year District-wide plan specifically designed to close the opportunity gap within the district. Her work led to the hiring of a diversity and inclusion specialist who will be on retainer to directly address issues of racism in the school system. She has been an ordained clergywoman in the African Methodist Episcopal tradition for 15 years.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice Chair, Cambridge School Committee

Co-Chair, Budget; Contract Negotiations Subcommittees

Member, School Climate Subcommittee

Member, Governance and Communications*

Buildings and Grounds; Community Relations Subcommittees

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Vice Chair, Board of Directors, YWCA Cambridge

Board Member, Cambridge Peace Commission

Fellow, Boston Opportunity Agenda; Barr Foundation*

Regional Field Director, Deval Patrick Campaign*

Alumna, Emerge-Massachusetts

Educational Background

MUPS, Georgia State University

MDiv, Columbia Theological Seminary

BA, Bethune-Cookman University

Current Position

Director, Policy and Outreach, Urban Land Institute (ULI) Boston/New England

In Her Own Words

“Because of a strong family and the power of public education, I am the woman I am today. I know the importance of public education, and I'm determined to ensure all kids in Cambridge have access to a school system that allows them to thrive.”

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.”

MARIA BURGE

Town Council, Town of Greenfield Precinct 6

2015-2017

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina

Public Service Highlights

Maria Burge has long been committed to public service for Greenfield; she began her career by becoming the first female police officer for the town. After serving on a task force dedicated to the youth of Greenfield, Burge ran for office in 2015 and was elected to Town Council. During her time in office, she advocated for a new youth center to be built. Burge has focused her efforts on successfully implementing the town's new master plan, and has also supported the construction of a senior center in Greenfield.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Greenfield Youth Commission

Member, Ways and Means Committee; Appointments and Ordinance Committee; Greenfield School Committee*

Member, Domestic Crisis Intervention Unit for the Greenfield Police Department

Member, Human Rights Commission

Member, Mayor's Task Force for Teens

Member, Mayor's Task Force for Domestic Violence

Current Position

Greenfield Court Officer, Trial Courts of Massachusetts

Electoral Significance

Maria served as the first Latina member of the Greenfield Town Council.

MEHREEN N. BUTT

Town Council, Town of Wakefield

2017-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Pakistani



Public Service Highlights

In 2017, Mehreen Butt became the first American-Muslim woman elected to a local governing body in Massachusetts. With more than 15 years working in social justice and public policy fields and on local, state, and federal campaigns, Councilor Butt is committed to advancing better representation, diversity, and inclusion in the workforce and in government. Her priorities include passing policies and funding programs that protect vulnerable populations, preserving our natural resources including our lakes and parks, and working towards better transportation choices for residents of Wakefield.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Researcher, Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, Massachusetts Legislature*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, New England Muslim Bar Association

Trustee, Board for Melrose/Wakefield Health Care

Advisory Member, South Asian Bar Association of Greater Boston

Associate Member, Friends of Lake Quannapowitt; Wakefield Alliance Against Violence (WAAV)

Alumnae, Emerge Massachusetts

Alumnae, Women's Bar Association Women's Leadership Program

Educational Background

JD, American University's Washington College of Law

BS, Tufts University

Current Position

Associate Director of Policy and Government Affairs, Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts (PPLM)

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"I am very proud to be the first American-Muslim woman elected to a municipality in Massachusetts. I am even prouder of the women who have joined me since I was elected. As someone who has a seat at the table, my goal is to get more under-represented individuals elected, particularly women of color. I am a public policy expert, and the best public policy results when you have diverse voices at the decision-making table."

ANDREA CABRAL

Sherriff, 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 Sherriff 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 the agencies in the secretariat, including the State Police, the National Guard, and the State Department of Correction.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Public Safety and Community Mitigation Subcommittee, Cannabis Advisory Board

Department of Justice Science Advisory Board*

Assistant District Attorney, Middlesex County District Attorney's Office*

Assistant Attorney General*

Chief of District Courts; Chief of the Domestic Violence Unit; Suffolk County District Attorney's Office*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Analyst, The Jim and Margery Show, WGBH Boston Public Radio

Member, Massachusetts Mentoring Partnership Board*

Advisory Board Member, Rappaport Center for Law and Public Policy

Editorial Board, Mass Lawyer's Weekly

Member, Governing Board of the Mass Mentoring Partnership

Educational Background

JD, Suffolk University Law School

BA, Boston College

Current Position

CEO, MassGrow/Ascend Mass, LLC

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 CALABRESE

City Council, City of Agawam

2004-2009; 2012-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Mediterranean African American



Public Service Highlights

As Vice President of the Agawam City Council who was the top vote-getter in the two most recent election cycles, Councilor Calabrese serves as President of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, member of the Local Government Advisory Committee alongside Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito, and on the Massachusetts Municipal Councilors' Association Board. Currently employed in diverse professional fields including dental hygiene, law, and rental property management, she has practiced bankruptcy, real estate, and trusts and estates since 1990. As Council Vice President, she has fought to ensure that public employees, particularly teachers, police, and firefighters have the necessary skills and equipment needed to maximize their performance.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice President, Agawam City Council

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

President, Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA)

Member, Local Government Advisory Committee, MMA

Member, Massachusetts Municipal Councilors' Association Board*

Assistant Attorney General under L. Scott Harshbarger*

Member (formerly President), Greater Springfield Business and Professional Women's Club

Educational Background

JD, Quinnipiac University School of Law

BA, University of Bridgeport

AS, Springfield Technical Community College

Current Position

Registered Dental Hygienist and Legal Counsel, Agawam Dental Arts; Rental Property Manager, MICE, LLC

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Never let those seeking to maintain archaic gender roles keep you from taking the lead. Lead confidently."

VIRAPHANH (VIRA) DOUANGMANY CAGE

School Committee, Town of Amherst

2015-2018

Racial/Ethnic Background: Laotian American



Public Service Highlights

One of Vira's key priorities while in office was to ensure that children have access to an excellent public education full of opportunities to explore being creators, leaders, dreamers, problem-solvers, and visionaries. She supported 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. In 2016, she became the first Lao American to run for state representative in Massachusetts.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Massachusetts Asian American Commission

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

Member, Amherst Media Board of Directors

Co-Chair, Executive Board, Youth Action Coalition*

Representative, Regional School Committee, Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools*

Educational Background

BA, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Current Position

Program Coordinator, BakuCare

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."

TINA CARDOSO

Brockton City Council, City of Brockton At-Large

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American/Cape Verdean



Public Service Highlights

Active in the community and elected as a change agent, Councilor Cardoso was elected to the Brockton City Council in 2019. Founder of a nonprofit organization, Cape Verdean Women United, she seeks to encourage and empower women of all cultures to be more involved in their communities and with their youth. Focused on mental health awareness and violence prevention, she is particularly concerned about domestic violence. Her priorities on the council include advocating for increased funding for mental health and violence prevention programs, better community and police relationships, and addressing health disparities and racial inequities that existed pre-Covid and now further exacerbated by the pandemic. She is working for increased rental assistance, workers' rights and safety, and financial assistance for small businesses affected by the pandemic.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member and Subcommittee Chair, Brockton Health Equity Task Force

Member, Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Founder and Executive Director, Cape Verdean Women United

Member, Brockton Democratic City Committee

Founding Member, Black and Latino Municipal Caucus

Educational Background

BSN, UMass Boston

Current Position

Registered Nurse, Boston Medical Center

In Her Own Words

“You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world’s problems at once but don’t ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own.”

-MichelleObama

In My Own Words

“Follow your heart, stay strong, surround yourself with positive people and understand that you were born to lead despite the obstacles you are faced with.”

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. Councilor Carney prioritizes taxes, constituent service, the city budget, city ordinances, public safety, and road repair.

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
- Chair & Member, City Property 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*
- Vice Chairperson, Aquinnah Gaming Corporation
- Board President and Board Member, Greater New Bedford Boys & Girls Club*

Educational Background

BA, Southeastern Massachusetts University (now UMass Dartmouth)

Current Position

Director, Inmate Community Work Program, Bristol County Sheriff'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!"

ANDREA JOY CAMPBELL

City Council, City of Boston District 4

2016-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Andrea Campbell was first elected in 2015 to represent District 4 on the Boston City Council, which includes sections of Dorchester, Mattapan, Jamaica Plain, and Roslindale and is overwhelmingly a district of color. In 2018, at the start of her second term, she was unanimously elected City Council President by her colleagues, becoming the first African American woman to serve as Council President. With a focus on equitable education, public safety and criminal justice reform, affordable housing, and racial equity initiatives, Councilor Campbell chairs the Council's Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice and has worked to increase opportunities for youth in the City of Boston. She led the successful effort to pass the Community Preservation Act to generate affordable housing and preserve green spaces. As Council President, she brought the Council through a robust racial equity training to empower Councilors and staff with tools to use a racial equity lens in policy-making and public service.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice

Vice Chair, Education Committee

Vice Chair, Special Committee on Civil Rights; Committee of Arts, Culture, and Special Events*

Member, Committees on Healthy Women, Families, and Communities; Housing and Community Development; Special Committee on the Status of Black and Latino Men and Boys*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Deputy Legal Counsel, Office of MA Governor Deval Patrick*

Interim General Counsel, Metropolitan Area Planning Council*

Associate, Proskauer LLP for Labor and Employment Department*

President, Lionheart Foundation*

Educational Background

JD, University of California, Los Angeles

BA, Princeton University

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Do not wait for someone to tell you it’s your turn. Do not wait for someone to tell you that you need more money, you need more experience, you need more support from certain stakeholders. If you feel in your heart that you can make a difference in your community, go for it.”

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. Since her first term, she has helped pass reforms to the state's CORI system, curtailed the misuse of special education dollars, been instrumental in the passage of civil rights protections for transgender individuals, re-written laws on school discipline, and successfully defended millions of dollars for youth development. A voice for those affected by housing displacement, hate crimes, and youth violence, she prioritizes sound fiscal reform and effective stewardship of taxpayer dollars in her work as a State Senator.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chairperson, Joint Committee on Cannabis Policy

Chairperson, Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities

Vice Chair, Joint Committee on the Judiciary

Member, Joint Committees on Election Laws; Financial Services;
Public Safety and Homeland Security

Senior Legislative Aide, State Senator Cheryl Jacques*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Political Advisor, Barbara Lee Family Foundation*

Director of Outreach, Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center*

Teacher, Lynn and Boston Public Schools*

Educational Background

BA, 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.”

LINDA H. CHOW

School Committee, Town of Wellesley

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Chinese American



Public Service Highlights

First elected to the Wellesley School Committee in March 2018, Linda Chow is currently serving as Chair for the 2020-2021 school year. She was re-elected in March 2021 for a second 3-year term on School Committee and for her second 3-year term as a Town Meeting Member. The parent of two Wellesley High School graduates, Chairwoman Chow's early career was in technology. More than a decade ago, she shifted her focus to education and leadership development. Citing an inclusive school climate as a high priority for the district, she seeks to directly support the schools' efforts to further promote diversity, equity and inclusion by implementing the Committee's Anti-Racism Resolution through the review of district policies with an equity lens, as well as being part of the district's team at DESE's Culturally Responsive Practices Leadership Academy. Other priorities include continuing the safe transition back to full in-person learning. Also, she chairs the Policy Subcommittee and serves as the Committee liaison to the Playing Fields Task Force.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Town Meeting Member (Precinct B) Technology

Chair, Wellesley Scholarship Foundation (former Co-President)

Board Member, Teachers21 (former Board Chair)

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Co-President, Wellesley Education Foundation*

Founding Member/Treasurer for Wellesley Youth Basketball Association*

Co-President, Wellesley Middle School Parent-Teacher Organization*

Educational Background

MBA, Harvard University

BA, Wellesley College

Current Position

Self-employed

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Running for and serving in public office have pushed me way out of my comfort zone, but what an incredible growth opportunity it has been to chair our town's School Committee, especially during a pandemic! It has been so gratifying to work alongside such terrific colleagues as well as an amazing team of administrators and educators who have had to reinvent K-12 education in such a rapid timeframe. My advice to aspiring women of color public leaders is as follows:

- It is important to be your authentic self and to stay focused on doing what is right.
- You have to be willing to roll up your sleeves and to do the work.
- And be sure to practice listening to understand and try not to take things personally"

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

MEd, University of Massachusetts Amherst

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

Current Position

Development Operations Manager and Board Liaison, The House of Seven Gables

Electoral Significance

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

NATACHA CLERGER

Town Council, Town of Randolph

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Caribbean/Black American



Public Service Highlights

Elected to the Randolph Town Council in 2017, Councilor Clerger works to put the needs of others first and take pride in the latest program, Concerned Citizens of Randolph, which she co-founded when the government shutdown, providing fresh fruits and produce to an average of 500 guests every week from Randolph and surrounding communities.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Veteran, United States Army

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Co-Founder, Concerned Citizens of Randolph

Educational Background

Université Américaine des Cayes Haiti

Current Position

Owner, Full Color Events Planning & Party Rentals LLC

Owner, Saveur et Couleur Catering

In Her Own Words

“You only fail because you did not try.”

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.”

FRAN COOPER

School Committee, City of Cambridge

1984-1991

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

After being asked to run and saying “no” three times as she didn’t have any “image of myself in that kind of role,” Fran Cooper first ran for School Committee in 1981. She had four children, aged 5-12 at the time. While her bid fell short, she ran again and was elected in 1983. She served four terms on the Cambridge School Committee and during her tenure initiated a parent feedback survey, a teacher recognition program to honor excellence, and initiated and collaborated on a teacher orientation program which included a “Buddy” system and other supports.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice Chair, Cambridge School Committee*

Member, Long Range Planning Committee*

Co-Chair, Superintendent Search Committee*

Corporation President, Central School*

Member of Parent Councils, Parent Council President*

Member of Steering Committees, Graham and Parks School (formerly Cambridge Alternative Public School)*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Community Learning Center Board of Directors*

Counselor, Adult GED Program, Community Learning Center*

Volunteer for GED Student Support, Community Learning Center*

Educational Background

MEd, Harvard University

BA, Pennsylvania State University

Retired

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"If you are surprised (as I was) by requests to run for any office or decide that your experiences have provided you with a lot to offer: Give yourself several weeks, ideally a few months, to first think through what you'd like to accomplish and, second, talk to others who have run effective campaigns and/or performed well once elected. Put your plans on paper and solicit feedback and advice from those you trust and admire. Don't reinvent a wheel if one already exists."

GARGI COOPER

School Committee, Town of Swampscott

2014-2019

Racial/Ethnic Background: Bengali



Public Service Highlights

Elected to the Swampscott School Committee in 2014, Gargi Cooper served two terms and worked to strengthen Swampscott's infrastructure and improve efficiencies, as well as ensure that there was a plan for addressing aging schools and developing a technology plan to meet the learning needs of students across the district. Currently a nurse practitioner at the Lynn Community Health Center, Gargi is a leader in developing programs to provide comprehensive care services to homeless populations.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, School Committee, Swampscott*

Liaison, Renewable Energy Committee*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Board of Trustees, North Shore Medical Center

PTA President, Hadley School*

Troop Leader, Girl Scouts*

Soccer Coach, SYSA*

Educational Background

MS, MGH Institute of Health Professions

BS, Boston University

Current Position

Family Nurse Practitioner, Lynn Community Health Center

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."

-Ruth Bader Ginsburg

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.”

PAMELA DAVIS

School Committee, City of Randolph

2017-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Mother of three children who have graduated from the Randolph School District, Pamela Davis is currently serving her second term as a member of the Randolph School Committee. A resident of Randolph for 19 years, she has seen a lot of changes and attributes her success partly on being able to continue her education as a path to building a career to support her family. Her experience with busing in the 1970's has also contributed to her goal of becoming involved in her community. She believes that access to good quality education is an opportunity for every person/child, and most importantly, is a human right.

Educational Background

BA, Wheelock College

AD, Roxbury Community College

In Her Own Words

“It takes a Village to raise a child.”

“I returned to my community schools by the time I entered middle school. I have been blessed to attend public schools where the teaching environment included adults who were like my parents. They were role models and my home away from home.”

MARIA DE LA CRUZ

City Council, City of Lawrence District A

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Born in the Dominican Republic, Maria De La Cruz was elected to the Lawrence School Committee in 2017. School Committee Member De La Cruz worked alongside others to secure a Lawrence branch of Cambridge College so that students do not have to travel to Boston. Among her achievements is helping to bring \$110 million to the city to build the new high school to be located in South Lawrence and winning the battle for students to wear uniforms at the request of parents. She continues to work on improving Lawrence's public school education, increasing after school activities for students, helping to set up parent-teacher organizations in Lawrence public schools as well as teach citizenship-English classes, and making Lawrence's streets safer by reducing speeding with speed bumps and also reducing crime with security cameras and streetlights.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice President, Lawrence Democratic City Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Founder, The Youth of the Neighborhood for a Better Community

President, District A Neighborhood Association

Parent Coordinator, HOPE Program Member, Lawrence Community Works

Teacher, Lawrence Public Schools*

Educational Background

MA, Cambridge College BEd, City College New York

In Her Own Words

"It is not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

John F. Kennedy

LINDA DORCENA FORRY

State Senate, Massachusetts Legislature 1st Suffolk

2013-2018

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 12th Suffolk

2005-2013

Racial/Ethnic Background: Haitian American



Public Service Highlights

A first generation Haitian American, Linda Dorcena Forry has dedicated much of her professional life to public service, holding various positions in state and local government. Upon her election to the Massachusetts House in 2005, Forry became the second Haitian American to serve in public office in Massachusetts. Elected to the Senate in 2012, she championed improvements to the state's education system, worked on job creation, and promoted business development. 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 played a leadership role on immigration issues.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Joint Committee on Housing; 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

Member, Boys and Girls Clubs of Dorchester Board

Member, Ward 13 and Ward 17 Democratic Committees

Member, Milton Library Foundation*

Member, Boston Foundation Haiti Relief and Reconstruction Fund Advisory Council*

Member, National Haitian American Elected Officials Network (NAEHON)*

Member, American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL)*

Educational Background

MPA, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

BS, Carroll School of Management, Boston College

Current Position

Vice President of Diversity, Inclusion & Community for the Northeast, Suffolk Construction

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Leaders

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

JANE C. EDMONDS

School Committee, Town of Sharon

1972-1977

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Jane C. Edmonds was the first woman of color elected statewide to a local municipal office and the first African American 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 founder, CEO/President of a Boston-based business for over 20 years (Jane C. Edmonds & Associates, Inc.) and is now CEO/President of Jane's Way, LLC. 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

Chair, Goodwill Morgan Memorial

Board Member, Lahey Hospital & Medical Center

Board Member, Facing History and Ourselves

Commissioner, Group Insurance Commission

Board Member, Boston Women's Workforce Council

Educational Background

JD, Boston College Law School

BA, Harvard University

Current Position

Vice President for Programming and Community Outreach, Babson College

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"I did it anyway!" Do not ever limit your dreams. Step out of your comfort zone. Know that others have felt and surpassed the same fears. Just do it."

LYDIA EDWARDS

City Council, City of Boston District 1

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Councilor Edwards has spent her entire career as an advocate, activist, and as a voice on behalf of society's most vulnerable. Serving in her third term on the Boston City Council, she works to ensure opportunity, good schools, safe streets, and a strong local economy for Boston as she represents the communities of East Boston, Charlestown, and the North End. Named a "Game Changer" by *The Boston Globe* in 2017 for her creative ways of approaching housing and for bringing together developers, tenants, and homeowners to generate innovative solutions, Councilor Edwards works to increase access to housing and ensure quality transportation through environmentally sustainable development. In 2015, Councilor Edwards received honorable mention for Bostonian of the Year from *The Boston Globe*.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Government Operations; Housing and Community Development Committees

Vice Chair, Veterans and Military Affairs

Member, City and Neighborhood, Services; Education; Environment, Resiliency, and Parks; Jobs, Wages, and Workforce Development; Small Business and Workforce Development; Post Audit; Planning, Development, and Transportation

Deputy Director, Housing Stability, Mayor's office*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

A Founding Member, East Boston's Community Soup Kitchen

Attorney, Greater Boston Legal Services*

Statewide Campaign Coordinator, Massachusetts Coalition for Domestic Workers*

Educational Background

BA, Marymount College of Fordham University

JD, American University Washington College of Law

LLM, Boston University School of Law

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Be yourself. Ignore the polls, social media, and what others say. Meet people where they are and know you have something in common with everyone."

NIKA C. ELUGARDO

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 15th Suffolk

2019-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

With more than 20 years of experience in community and economic development with public, private, and nonprofit leaders in communities of color, Representative Elugardo was first elected in 2018 to represent the communities of Brookline, Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill, and Roslindale. Based on her commitment to permanently closing the race-and gender-based wealth gaps, her priorities include quality and relevant education for all, accessible and single-payer health care for all, and safe, affordable housing for all.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Joint Committee on Elder Affairs

Member, Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities

Member, Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development

Member, House Committee on Technology and Intergovernmental Affairs

Jamaica Plain Liaison and Senior Policy Advisor, Massachusetts Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Consultant and Founding Director, Applied Evaluation Systems Department, Emmanuel Gospel Center*

Founding Director, MassSaves*

Foreclosure Prevention Project Manager, National Consumer Law Center*

Educational Background

JD, Boston University Law School

MA, Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

BA, MIT

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Every woman is a powerful woman. If your power is invisible to you, it will be invisible to others. As you see yourself as an agent of change and influence, others will respond to your confidence. Surround yourself with people and experiences who build that confidence. This includes taking chances and failing but learning. Learning is power. Know your power.”

MARIE ENOCHTY

School Committee, Town of Brewster

2008-2020

Racial/Ethnic Background: Japanese



Public Service Highlights

For the past 12 years, Marie Enohty served on the Brewster School Committee. She worked on a team that wrote Massachusetts Infant and Toddler Guidelines and also worked for Valora Washington and the Community Advocates for Young Leaders Institute in supporting early childhood educators across the state. Her dedication for children and high-quality education continues to shine through her work at Boston Public Schools as an Early Childhood Program Manager. She oversees coaching and mentoring, as well as implementing curriculum support and professional development. She leads the efforts to ensure the work encompasses CLSP (Culturally Linguistically Sustained Practices).

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

President, Cape Cod Chapter, National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC)*

Board Member, Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children*

Board Member, Boston Children's Museum's Native American Early Childhood Council*

Board Member, Latham Centers*

Board Member, Cape Cod Collaborative*

President, Cape Cod Chapter, National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC)*

Educational Background

MS, Bank Street

BA, Pratt Institute

Current Position

Early Childhood Program Manager, Boston Public Schools

In Her Own Words

“Courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage, you can't practice any other virtue consistently.”

-Maya Angelou

ANNISSA ESSAIBI-GEORGE

Boston City Council, City of Boston At-Large

2016-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Arab American



Public Service Highlights

First elected to the Boston City Council in 2015, Councilor Essaibi-George works to ensure quality and access to Boston's schools and economic development, as well as advance public safety in the city. A former 13-year veteran in the Boston Public Schools (BPS), she helped secure \$3 million in funding for BPS youth experiencing homelessness and collaborated with city agencies, nonprofit groups, and the private sector to create the Family-Led Stability Pilot to house families experiencing homelessness. In order to address the scourge of addiction, she has worked to double the size of the Boston Public Health Commission's Mobile Sharps Team to remove needles from parks and public spaces. She has also advocated for the expansion of the BEST program so that more mental health clinicians can ride with and assist Boston Police officers intervening during a mental health crisis.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Committee on Education

Vice Chair, Committees on Ways and Means; Public Health

Member, Committees on Civil Rights; Community Preservation Act; Public Safety and Criminal Justice; Strong Women, Families, and Communities; Pilot Reform; Small Business and Workforce Development

Member, DotHouse Health Center Board of Directors

Commissioner, City of Boston Residency Commission*

Teacher, East Boston High School, Boston Public Schools*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Columbia Point Task Force

Board Member, McCormack Civic Association; Member, Dorchester Day Parade Committee; President, Columbia-Savin Hill Civic Association*

Student Services Liaison, Boston Private Industry Council*

Educational Background

MEd, University of Massachusetts Boston

BA, Boston University

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"After teaching in the Boston Public Schools for 13 years, I pursued my passion for politics first kindled at a youth-led protest at City Hall as a young BPS student. When I ran for office, education was then, as it is now, one of the most pressing issues in our City. And by mobilizing the voices of teachers, parents, BPS graduates, neighbors, immigrants and women-owned small businesses, the girl with the last name Essaibi got elected to the Boston City Council, out-seating an 18 year incumbent. I am proud to be the only elected of Arab descent in the Greater Boston area, the only teacher on the Council, and to serve on the most diverse body in the history of Boston. My election is proof of the power of representation and diversity for young women of color with political aspirations."

IRENE G. FELICIANO-SIMS

School Committee, City of Holyoke Ward 4

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

A dedicated member of the Holyoke School Committee, School Committee Member Feliciano-Sims has prioritized issues of classroom size, early literacy, and programs for advanced students. Selected as Minority Caucus representative to the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) 2018 All-State School Committee, Feliciano-Sims works to address the needs of minority students, transient children and families, as well as immigrants. She envisions a community that offers a resource center for easy access to program resources in order to introduce more residents to initiatives such as Student Pathways, which offers individualized programming to students to help guide them through career and college planning.

Educational Background

Holyoke Community College

Current Position

Associate Director, Viability, Inc.

In Her Own Words

“We’re trying to tell them that their thoughts and feelings do matter. They’re residents of the city, and they’re invested, no matter what neighborhood they live in.”

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, 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

1987-2016

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

The longest serving African American woman in the Massachusetts Legislature who spent thirty years in the House, 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 prioritized issues involving basic human services and community development and has served as a staunch advocate for 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*

Chair, Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators; Member, Massachusetts Progressive Caucus; Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus*

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."

CHERYL A. FRAIZER

School Committee, Town of Randolph

2015-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Elected in 2017 to the Randolph School Committee, Cheryl Fraizer draws on her leadership skills and years of civic engagement to enhance the involvement of community members in the school system. She is committed to ensuring that the needs of students with social, linguistic, and diagnosed issues are addressed. She is also an advocate for senior citizens in the town of Randolph and surrounding communities and has been honored for her community service and leadership work in Boston and Randolph. School Committee Member Fraizer is a Randolph Senior Olympian Medal Winner.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Contract Negotiations; Facilities Management and Improvement; Finance; Facilities; Negotiations Committees, Randolph School Committee

Elementary School Representative, Randolph School Committee

Family Health Worker, Public Health Commission*

EMS/EMT Lieutenant and Director of Scheduling, Boston Emergency Medical Services Boston*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Neighborhood Worker, ABCD/Roxbury North Dorchester APAC

Communications Ambassador, First Baptist Church, Randolph

Vice President, Randolph Council on Aging

Treasurer, The Friends of the Randolph Seniors Correspondence, Randolph Garden Club

Member, Randolph Women's Club

Chair Officer and Member, Randolph Elks*

Educational Background

School of Allied Health Science: Certified Family Health Worker, Northeastern University

School of Social Work, Boston College and Boston University

Certifications: Boston EMS EMT/Lieutenant

Current Position

Retired

In Her Own Words

“If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. The time is always right to do what is right.”

-Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

JUDITH GARCIA

City Council, City of Chelsea District 5

2016-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Judith Garcia currently serves as the Vice President of the Chelsea City Council. She is the first Honduran American to serve on the council, as well as the first woman to Chair the City's Charter Review Commission. She has built her career in a variety of roles and industries, mostly in the public and nonprofit sector. Most recently, she spearheaded the Latinx communications and grassroots efforts for Joe Kennedy III's U.S. Senate race.

Councilor Garcia has served on multiple diplomatic missions in Taiwan, Belgium, and Russia advocating for social issues that are important to her such as immigration, healthcare, education, and economic mobility. Her steadfast commitment has been featured on a PBS documentary Latinos are Essential and has earned her multiple accolades including being recognized as a Latino Boston 30 under 30 by El Mundo Newspaper in 2016.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chairwoman, Chelsea City Charter Review Commission

Two-Term Vice President, Chelsea City Council*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Spokesperson, Chelsea's Covid19 Emergency Task Force

Advisor, Groundwork Project

Board Member, HarborCOV

HelpLine Counselor, Health Care for All

Educational Background

BA, Wheaton College

In Her Own Words

"In my six years of public service, I've seen the most beautiful things happen when it comes from collective efforts. There is so much political power in unity."

KELLY GARCIA

School Committee, City of Chelsea District 7

2016-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican-Latina



Public Service Highlights

Elected in 2015 as the youngest person elected in her district to the Chelsea School Committee, Kelly Garcia believes in public education for all students, regardless of race, gender, nationality, and income. Her main priority in elected office is to honor, uplift, and prepare students for a successful future. She proposed and spearheaded passage of the Safe-Haven Resolution to protect undocumented students, implemented Indigenous Peoples Day and Juneteenth as holidays on the academic calendar for the district and organized several community forums for students, staff, and families to discuss racial equity concerns in the district. In 2020, School Committee Member Garcia was selected to serve as Chairwoman of Committee.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Budget and Finance; Human Resources Sub-committees*

Policy & Procedures; Curriculum & Instruction Sub-committees*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Mentor, Leadership for Educational Equity (LEE)

Mentor, Teach for America (TFA)

Volunteer, Chelsea Collaborative

Multicultural Peer Educator, Office of Multicultural Education*

Ambassador, 'Say Yes On 2'; campaign*

Special Education Teacher, Teach for America*

Educational Background

MA, Boston University

BA, College of the Holy Cross

Current Position

Chairwoman, Chelsea School Committee

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

When first running, as a Latina, I realized that:

- We ARE qualified and more than ready for this work
- Do NOT doubt yourself
- Our voice is needed in ALL spaces (political, educational, professional, and beyond)

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.

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

Electoral Significance

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

ALTHEA GARRISON

City Council, City of Boston At-Large

2019-2020

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 5th Suffolk

1993-1995

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black American



Public Service Highlights

A resident of Dorchester, Althea Garrison's priorities while serving as a State Representative and City Councilor included ensuring affordable housing for residents, caring for senior citizens, supporting homeless veterans, promoting workforce development, and addressing the many challenges in public transportation. Throughout her political career, which included a run for Mayor of Boston and the Massachusetts Senate, she worked tirelessly to put the people of Boston first and to serve them above all else. Elected State Representative in 1992, her most significant achievements in the House included working to secure increased funding for public housing and passage of the mail-in voter registration law. As the next-place at-large finisher in the 2017 Boston City Council election, she became an At-Large Councilor in 2019 when a vacancy arose.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice-Chair, Jobs, Wages, and Workforce Development Committee, Boston City Council

Member, Committees on: Planning, Development, and Transportation; Small Business and Consumer Affairs; Civil Rights; Community Preservation, Boston City Council*

Member, Housing and Urban Development Committee, MA Legislature*

Chair, Committee on Election Laws, MA Legislature*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Vice President, Uphams Corner Health Center Board

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

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Stay focused and maintain your values and independence.”

VIRGINIA SIMMS GEORGE

School Committee, Town of Northborough

2011-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

School Committee Member Simms George has served on the Northborough School Committee for a decade. Her long-term community leadership activities includes years of service on the Community Affairs Committee. She is an Honorary Alumna of Alfred University.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Personnel Board

Northborough Representative, Assabet Regional Vocational High School Committee

Member, Community Affairs Committee*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Library Trustee

LINKS, Inc., Springfield Chapter

Member, Women's Leadership Center Advisory Board

Student Counselor and Mentor, Alfred University (New York)

Educational Background

MA, University of Maryland

BA, Virginia Union

Current Position

Court Mediator, Family Services (self-employed)

Electoral Significance

Virginia Simms George was the first woman of color to be elected to the Northborough School Committee.

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

Commissioner, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination*

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

Co-Chair, Transition Team, Mayor Martin Walsh*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, YouthBuild USA; Boston's Higher Ground; Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus; Tufts Health Plan & Tufts Health Plan Foundation

Advisory Board Member, Children's Health Watch; Commonwealth Seminar; Mothers for Justice and Equality; Voter Choice Massachusetts

Member, Ward 15 Democratic Committee; Democratic State Committee

Vice-Chair, Advisory Board, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy*

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

Educational Background

MBA, Sawyer School of Management, Suffolk University

MS, Columbia University

BA, Rutgers College, Rutgers University

Current Position

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

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.”

IDA GORDON

School Committee, Town of Randolph

2009-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African/Caribbean



Public Service Highlights

When 17 years old, Ida came to United States from Costa Rica. In 1997, Ida and Delroy adopted three brothers, one of whom was brutally murdered in 2019. Her life has been built around children and she was recognized by the Commonwealth with the Manuel Caraballo Award - Commissioner's Award for Outstanding Commitment to Families and Children. She was elected to the Randolph School Committee in 2009, serving as Chair for six years. School Committee Member Gordon was instrumental in leading the district in a positive direction from underperforming to proficient and the district is in the process of building a new elementary school. She was honored by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees in 2017 by being named to the All-State School Committee for her work on the Randolph School Committee and the many activities she has participated in as an advocate for children.

In Her Own Words

Ida believes in “living each day as if it was my last; giving and loving unconditionally.”

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, School Committee, Town of Randolph

Social Worker, Massachusetts Department Children and Families

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Randolph Education Foundation

Member, Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition

Educational Background

BA, UMass Boston

Current Position

Intensive Foster Care Recruiter and Trainer, Children's Services of Roxbury

SAUNDRA GRAHAM

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

1977-1988

Cambridge 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

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.”

BARBARA GRESHAM

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

2010-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

School Committee Member Gresham has been a resident of Springfield for more than 30 years. First elected to the Springfield School Committee in 2009, she is the mother of two adult children and three grandsons. School Committee Member Gresham was selected as one of the “Go Red Leading Ladies” of Western Massachusetts in 2013 and the “Change Agent Award” Pioneer Valley Project in 2016 for her work to build community and change lives. In 2017, she was the recipient of the William H. Carney Medal of Honor Award and the Massachusetts Unsung Heroines Award. She received the Women of Excellence Award and Lift Every Voice Community Service Award in 2018.

In Her Own Words

“I will always be that woman other women can count on.”

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, School Safety; Parent Concerns Subcommittees

Member, Curriculum and Programs; Vocational Education Subcommittees

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Ward 4 Democratic Committee, Springfield

President, Old Hill Neighborhood Council

Chair, Springfield Public Health Kick-off Committee

Member, Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services Board

Member, New Jerusalem COGIC Board of Trustees

Educational Background

AD, Springfield Technical Community College

University of Georgia

Current Position

Nurse, HCS (Holyoke, Chicopee, Springfield) HeadStart

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

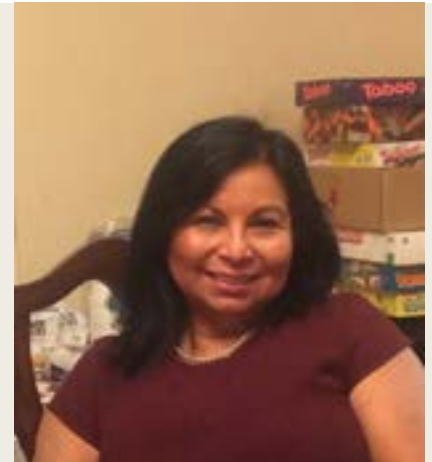
Delegate, Massachusetts Democratic Convention

LUCIA HENRIQUEZ

School Committee, City of Chelsea District 4

2005-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, 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.”

ANA HERNANDEZ

School Committee, City of Chelsea

2009-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Ana, a Chelsea native, joined the Chelsea School Committee in November of 2009 representing District 6. With more than three decades of experience in human resources management, event management, and inpatient interpretation, she serves on the Human Resources Subcommittee for Chelsea Public Schools. She has also participated on the Charter Review Committee for the City of Chelsea.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Charter Review Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Director of Cheering, Pop Warner Young Scholars Program

LIBBY HERNANDEZ

City Council, City of Holyoke

2019-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

A Latina woman of Puerto Rican descent, Libby Hernandez, after moving to Holyoke, recognized huge disparities when it came to the workforce, education opportunities, finances, and housing related to both being a woman and also brown. She has had 18 years of experience working under the Housing and Urban Development. Appointed to the Parks and Recreation Department, she later became the first Latina woman chair. In November 2019 she successfully defeated an incumbent and became the City Councilor for Ward 4 in Holyoke where she has been a homeowner for nearly two decades. Libby works tirelessly to bring equality to all residents in the Holyoke community.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

- Chair, Parks and Recreation Department, City of Holyoke
- Coordinator, Family Self Sufficiency, Holyoke Housing Authority
- Member, Community Preservation Act Committee, Holyoke*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

- Member, Nuestras Raices
- Member, Home ownership Collaborative through CHAPA (Citizens Housing and Planning Association)

Educational Background

- Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, Bard College
- Springfield Technical Community College

Current Position

Junior Rep 1, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In Her Own Words

A quote that Libby Hernandez lives by is by Don Pedro Albizu Campos “Raise your hands high all those who believe themselves to be free” People should not have to live oppressed by having to assimilate into a forced system of having other’s religion, customs, history shoved down our throats. We are intellectual individuals in a pursuit to become and maximize our potential in the borrowed time that we have been given. Let’s make it count and fight for a peaceful, inclusive tomorrow.”

VEDNA LACOMBE-HEYWOOD

School Committee, Town of Plymouth

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Haitian American



Public Service Highlights

A Haitian native who emigrated to the United States as a young child, Vedna Lacombe-Heywood is a Registered Nurse who helped implement one of the first “Stop the Bleed” trauma programs for students at Massachusetts public schools. The first person of color elected to the Plymouth School Committee and the first black elected official in Plymouth’s history, she is currently a member of the National Haitian American Elected Officials Network. As a teenager, she learned the importance of community service, advocacy, and social activism through church and family. She believes in the “lifting as we climb” mantra and often mentors’ young women, especially those from marginalized communities in order to expose them to civic engagement and leadership.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Managed Care Ombudsman Committee, State of Florida

Board Member, Plymouth Area Advisory Board, Massachusetts Department of Children and Families

Member, National Haitian American Elected Officials Network

Vice-Chair, Haitian American Chamber of Commerce of Massachusetts

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Director, League of Women Voters Massachusetts

Board Member, Southeast Massachusetts Division, March of Dimes

Chair, Plymouth Town Committee No Place for Hate

Member, Brockton Health Equity Task Force

Member, Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition

Member at large, N.A.A.C.P Member, Plymouth Fragment Society

Board Member, Haitian Community Partners

Educational Background

BSW, Florida Atlantic University

RN, Broward College

Current Position

Registered Nurse, Brigham & Women’s Hospital

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Leadership acknowledges, surroundings itself with, and brings others along. We are beholden to the past and stand firm in the present. We are because of who came before us, who is beside us and who will lead, way after we have left.”

VANNA HOWARD

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 17th Middlesex

2021-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Cambodian



Public Service Highlights

In the 2020 primary election, Vanna Howard beat a 22-year incumbent to represent the 17th Middlesex District to give back to the region that gave her so much after immigrating to the U.S. from Cambodia. The second Cambodian to be elected state legislator in Massachusetts and the first woman of Khmer (Cambodian) descent to be elected as state legislator in the United States and deeply involved in the politics and community of Lowell over the course of her professional career, Howard has served in various public service roles. These include Commissioner for both the state's Asian American Commission and Lowell Housing Authority, a survivor of the genocide in Cambodia, where both of her maternal grandparents, father, and three younger siblings died at the hands of the Khmer Rouge regime between 1975 and 1979. She resettled in the U.S. at age 11 after having spent more than two years in a Thai refugee camp. As a child refugee who spoke no English, she overcame tremendous adversity confronted with racism, physical abuse, and homelessness.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Joint Committees on Cannabis Policy; Education; Public Health; Racial Equity, Civil Rights, and Inclusion

Commissioner, Asian American Commission, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Commissioner, Lowell Housing Authority

Greater Lowell Regional Director, Congresswoman Niki Tsongas*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA), Ironstone Farm; Mill City Grows; Acre Family Child Care; Cultural Organization of Lowell; Boys and Girls Club of Greater Lowell; American Red Cross –NE Chapter; Project LEARN (Associate Board); DEI –Lowell Member

Suffolk County District Attorney's Office/Homicide Unit, Middlesex County District Attorney's Office/Superior Court Trial Team*

Chief of External and Government Relations, Lowell Community Health Center*

Volunteer, Refugee and Immigrant Support and Engagement (RISE) Coalition Steering Committee; The Wish Project; Cor Unum Meal Center; Lowell Canalwaters Cleaners; Lowell Litter Krewe

Alumna, Lowell Plan Public Matters

Educational Background

BA, University of Massachusetts Lowell

AA, Middlesex Community College

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Women are still making strides for gender equality. Women should be at the table when decisions are being made, for equal pay for equal work, reproductive rights and gender equity everywhere. Women supporting women has moved us closer and closer to these goals. I may be the first Cambodian-American female elected to the House of Representative in the United States, but I know I won't be the last, not when we're united and together as we are. It is my hope the history of all the women, who blazed the trail for many of us to cross, will serve as an encouragement to women to seek leadership roles in our communities and businesses. It must be a constant reminder to every woman of the changes we all have made, and the work for change going on today and tomorrow, as we confront the institutional and societal challenges put in our way."

KATRINA HUFF-LARMOND

Town Council, City of Randolph District 3

2017-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Council woman Huff-Larmond has been an active and proud resident of Randolph for 17 years. Involved in many community initiatives that have contributed to the growth of Randolph, her vision for continued growth in Randolph is focused on Community, Commitment and Collaboration, or C3.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Charter Review Committee

Member, Ordinance Sub-Committee

Member, Economic Development Sub-Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Senior Advisor, Randolph Youth Council

VicePresident, Suffrage 100MA Board

Member, Advisory Board of Directors, My Life My Choice; Co-Chair, DEI Committee

Member-at-Large, Simmons School of Social Work Alumni Board

Member-at-Large, Randolph Holbrook Pop Warner

Educational Background

MA, Simmons University, School of Social Work

BS, Northeastern University

Current Position

Professor at Simmons College and Boston University

Clinical Social Worker, The Home for Little Wanderers

In Her Own Words

"I am a public servant. I consider myself an advocate—someone who will fight for all voices to be heard in order for us to live in a safe and just society."

DENISE MARIE HURST

School Committee, City of Springfield At-Large

2010-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican and African American



Public Service Highlights

Denise (Estrada-Rosemond) Hurst was first elected to the Springfield School Committee in 2009, is in her third term, and currently serves as Vice President of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees. The top vote-getter of all School Committee and City Council candidates in the 2013 municipal election in the City of Springfield, her career has been defined by community engagement and she has been a policymaker and legislative advocate at the local, state, and federal levels. In 2016, Hurst was appointed by Treasurer Goldberg as regional manager of the Massachusetts State Lottery in Western Massachusetts. An inaugural graduate of the Leadership Institute for Political and Public Impact, School Committee Member Hurst has been honored with numerous awards including: 2013 Massachusetts All State School Committee Award, Urban Division; Business West's 40 under Forty Class of 2014; and 2015 100 Women of Color in New England. She was named 2019 Woman of the Year by the Professional Women's Chamber.

In Her Own Words

"Let her sleep for when she wakes she will move mountains."

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice Chair, Springfield School Committee

Secretary/Treasurer for Division V, Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Quality Improvement Coordinator and Human Rights Coordinator, Massachusetts Department of Mental Health

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, UMass Women into Leadership Board of Directors

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

Member, Executive Board of MotherWoman, Inc.; United Way Women's Leadership Council

Rape/Sexual Assault Counselor, Every Woman's Center

Big Sister, Big Brother/Big Sister

Adjunct Professor, Cambridge College; Holyoke Community College

Educational Background

MSW, Springfield College

BA, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Current Position

Vice President, Advancement and External Affairs, Springfield Technical Community College

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.”

KASSANDRA INFANTE

School Committee, City of Lawrence District A

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Kassandra Infante, who grew up in Lawrence and attended elementary and middle school in the city before her family moved away, was elected to the Lawrence School Committee from the Prospect Hill neighborhood at 26 years old, unseating an incumbent. Realizing her greatest passion lies in civic service and education justice, Kassie is studying for her Master's in Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education where she is building a curriculum at the intersection of education policy and social justice. Her work with the Greater Lawrence Education Justice Alliance involves a year-long critical participatory action research project focused on the educational experiences of Lawrence youth. As a School Committee Member, she advocates for a community-driven transition plan for the return of control of the schools to Lawrence officials, calling for transparency and accountability in quarterly school committee meetings run by the superintendent, and ensuring the inclusion of Latinx voices in decision-making.

In Her Own Words

“Early in life, I learned that if you want something, you had better make some noise.”

-Malcolm X

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Steering Committee Member, Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance
(Greater Lawrence Chapter)

Member, Andover Bread Loaf Educators Network

Programming Committee Co-Chair, Council for Advancement and Support of Education*

Innovation Fellow, Switchboard*

Volunteer Mentor, The Chica Project*

Educational Background

MS, Harvard University (anticipated 2021)

BS, University of North Carolina, Wilmington

LISA JACKSON

School Committee, Town of Brookline

2014-2017

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Elected to the Brookline School Committee in 2014, Lisa Jackson was committed to high quality education for the town of Brookline. With more than two decades of work in the social sector in a variety of roles, Lisa decided to leave academia to manage a college access and success program for the Boston Public Schools. As her eclectic trajectory evolved, Lisa stepped into organization leadership positions focused on evaluation and assessment, risk management, research and strategy development. Her priorities while serving on the Brookline School Committee included addressing issues of racial, gender and economic equity in the district, high quality data collection and use for making district decisions, and high-quality hiring for the district.

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

Board Treasurer, Single Stop USA*

Vice President, The Center for Effective Philanthropy*

Board Member, SPARK Microgrants; Boston School Funds; 10Thousand Windows; My Life My Choice

Managing Partner, New Profit Inc.*

Educational Background

PhD, Stanford University

MA, Stanford University

BA, Howard University

Current Position

Managing Partner, Imago Dei Fund

In Her Own Words

"It is better to be part of the solution than be part of the problem. And it is always better to do something. Period! "

KIM JANEY

Mayor, City of Boston

2021-Present

City Council, City of Boston District 7

2018-2021

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black/African American



Public Service Highlights

With deep roots in Roxbury and the South End, Council President Janey was sworn in as Mayor of Boston in March 2021, making her the first woman and first Black person to serve as Boston Mayor. As Council President, Janey was the first woman to represent District 7 on the Council. Janey's priorities include education, housing, small business development, and she is committed to ensuring that every resident has equitable access to opportunities and resources, in order to make Boston's neighborhoods stronger, safer, healthier and more vibrant. She has been a leader in the push for greater equity in City contracting, ensuring diversity in hiring, and supporting families impacted by trauma. Council President Janey has also worked to expand access to voting and to improve conditions for workers seeking to unionize. She is the 2015 Recipient of the Boston NAACP Difference Maker Award and the Sapphire Award in 2017.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Rules and Administration Committee

Member, Education Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Founding Board Member, MassVOTE

Member, Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus

Member, Boston Ward 12 Democratic Committee

Member, Boston NAACP, Executive Committee

Founder, Historic Moreland Street Neighborhood Association

Senior Project Director, Massachusetts Advocates for Children*

Educational Background

Smith College

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"As the first woman and the first Black Mayor of Boston, I'm here to tell you that we, women of color, are just getting started! Being a Black woman comes with an innate ability to lead. We have always known this. It's our past, it's our present, and it is our future. I understand that we are up against a system that was deliberately and methodically crafted by the founding fathers to silence the voices of women, but we will not be silenced. Never in my life has there been such an opportunity to create such transformative change; change that begins to dismantle patriarchy, racism, and white supremacy. So I encourage you to wear your crown and your cape proudly. And continue to use your voices, because our voices, coupled with action, will bring equity and justice for those we represent."

AFROZ KHAN

City Council, City of Newburyport At-Large

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Asian Indian



Public Service Highlights

Afroz Khan was first elected City Councillor At-Large in 2017. With more than twenty-five years of experience as an electrical engineer, Councillor Khan has been an active community member in Newburyport, Massachusetts where she has resided since 2005.

In her first term, Afroz demonstrated her commitment to residents through active engagement with the broader community. By conducting quarterly meetings with residents and other times when necessary, she has worked to develop and implement community forums on issues important to the community. She is now serving her second two-year term.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chairperson, Board of Joint Education

Member, Board of Budget & Finance

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Senior Program Manager, Consortium for Energy Efficiency*

Treasurer, Newburyport Parent-Teacher Organization*

Treasurer, Islamic Center of Boston (Wayland, MA)*

Educational Background

MEng, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

BS, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Current Position

The Forward Curve LLC, Senior Consulting Energy Engineer

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Be proud of where your family has come from because that defines where you have been and where you are going. We all can extend a helping hand to others by not only saving them a seat at the table but sharing our experiences to let others know they can also be here beside us. True representation can only be achieved by participation and inclusion of every voice.”

TERRY KWAN

School Committee, Town of Brookline

1985-2002

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 LÉBRON-MARTÍNEZ

City Council, City of Holyoke Ward 1

2011-Present

School Committee, City of Holyoke

2004-2010

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 fourth 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. She continues to be the voice and the advocate for residents on issues of education, economic and workforce development.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair and Co-Chair, Development and Governmental Committee

Member, Public Service and Ordinance Committees

Chair; Vice-Chair; Treasurer, Holyoke Redevelopment Board*

Co-Chair, Joint Committee of the City Council and School Board*

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 Service Director, MassHire Holyoke

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

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

MILDRED LEFEBVRE

School Committee, City of Holyoke Ward 1

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican and Cuban American



Public Service Highlights

During her time on the Holyoke School Committee, Mildred Lefebvre opposed the sale of a school building, focused on improving the quality of education for low-income children, and spoke out against cuts to special education funding. Since 2014, she has fought for equitable education for all students within the District with an emphasis on Special Education. When confronted with a problem or new issue, she works to ensure that students receive the supports they need in the educational setting. A 2015 candidate for mayor, School Committee Member Lefebvre is dedicated to economic issues, in securing more investments for businesses and examining a different commercial property tax rate. Concerned about public safety, she advocates for a greater emphasis on community policing.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Minority Caucus, Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Northeast Regional Director, National Hispanic Council of the National School Board Association

Co-Chair, Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board of Directors, The Nueva Esperanza Team

Educational Background

Holyoke Community College

Current Position

Visiting Nurse

In Her Own Words

“I firmly believe in family values, transparency, accountability and standing up for what you believe in no matter the obstacles that may stand in your way...”

City Council, City of Lawrence

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Dominican



Public Service Highlights

A Lawrence resident for the last 35 years, Ana Levy has worked as a community advocate, helping children and families in homeless situations. As Director of the Arson Prevention Program, she worked as a liaison between the community and the Lawrence Fire Department and created the youth group called Junior Firefighters within the city of Lawrence. She also coordinated a parent workshop for the Massachusetts Migrant Educational Program. Ana Levy received the Joseph M. Smith Consumer Award from the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers for helping to build the new Greater Lawrence Family Health Center. Three times she was recognized as “Woman of the Year” and received a certificate of Honor from Northern Essex Community College as a peer advisor and role model for non-native English-speaking students. As a woman, wife, mother, and grandmother, Councilwoman Levy is committed to serving her community and advocating for all those in need.

In Her Own Words

Together we are the voice and we can make a difference.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice-Chair, Housing Committee

Member, Ordinance Committee; Public Safety Committee; Budget and Finance Committee

Member, City Ad-hoc Committee for the ADA

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member of the Dominican Round Table; Desfile and Noche Dominicana; Ateneo Dominicano

President and Board Member, Greater Lawrence Family Health Center*

Member, Parents United; Council of Dominican American Voters; Semana Hispana*

Founder, Junior Firefighters Lawrence

Educational Background

BA, University Autonoma de Santo Domingo

Associate Degree, Northern Essex Community College

Current Position

Property Manager, Blakeley Building/Trinity Mgmt LLC Real Estate

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.

NINA LIANG

City Council, City of Quincy At-Large

2016-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Chinese American



Public Service Highlights

As the first Chinese-American City Councilor elected in her hometown of Quincy, and the first minority City Council President, Nina Liang was born in Quincy, raised by immigrant parents, and has experienced first-hand the challenges minority children and families face. Over the years, she has had the opportunity to be a part of community organizations that work to expand services to everyone in the city and those dedicated to addressing the needs of those who are new to both the language and customs of American culture. As City Councilor, Nina has worked to open the doors of government to every resident ensuring that their voices and concerns are heard. Her civic engagement and political experiences have taught her the importance of collaborative efforts among local organizations, businesses, and public service facilities to better address the needs of a diverse population, ensuring that all voices are heard.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

President, City Council

Chair, Ordinance Committee*

Chair and Current Vice Chair, Community Engagement Committee*

Board Member, Thomas Crane Library Foundation Board

Commissioner, Massachusetts Asian American Commission

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Volunteer, Asian Community Development Corporation; Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center; Quincy Asian Resources, Inc.; Father Bill's Annual Foodfest; South Shore YMCA; Quincy Community Action Programs

Co-founder, Quincy Women's Network

Board Member, D.O.V.E.; Maria Droste Counseling Services; Quincy Catholic Academy*

Educational Background

Studied International Business at Hofstra University

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Your experience and background is what drives your work in representing others who have had similar experiences. You give those who have shared experiences a voice. You are ready to lead, and your time is now.”

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.”

ZAIDA LUNA

City Council, Springfield Ward 1

2010-2015

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

First elected to the Springfield City Council in 2009, Zaida Luna was involved in efforts to bring ward representation to Springfield.

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

Current Position

Community Organizer, Archipelago Strategies Group

Electoral Significance

Zaida Luna was the first Latina elected to the Springfield City Council.

CHRISTINE MADORE

City Council, City of Salem Ward 2

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Taiwanese American



Public Service Highlights

Christine Madore was elected to the Salem City Council in 2017. Christine prioritizes her advocacy on expanding housing options, investment in public transportation, and inclusive community values. As an urban planning and development professional, Christine is working to ensure that all of Salem's residents and visitors benefit from smart growth and the vibrancy of downtown businesses.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Board of Directors, Harborlight Community Partners

Board Member, Salem Affordable Housing Trust Fund

Board Member, Salem Redevelopment Authority

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Project Consultant, Beyond Walls

Project Manager, Affirmative Investments Inc.

Regional Planner II, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Educational Background

MA, Tufts University

BA, University of Massachusetts Boston

Current Position

Vice President, Real Estate Services at MassDevelopment

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

Be your authentic self.

DIANA MALDONADO

Chelsea School Committee, City of Chelsea

2016-2017

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Diana Maldonado served as Chief Justice of the Chelsea District Court, where she sought to address issues such as substance abuse and domestic violence. Maldonado inspired local drug court sessions –such as the federal C.A.R.E. program –and founded the Chelsea District Drug Court. Furthermore, as an active member of the city’s School Committee, she has voted to extend preschool care, as well as worked towards increasing the school budget.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

- Member, Massachusetts Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- Member, Massachusetts Judges Conference
- Member, Massachusetts Association of Hispanic Attorneys
- Founder, Chelsea District Court Drug Court*
- President, Suffolk County Drug Court Advisory Board*
- Board Member, New England Association of Drug Court Professionals*

Educational Background

- JD, Northeastern University
- BA, State University of New York at Stony Brook

Current Position

Associate Justice, Massachusetts Appeals Court

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“It’s not about not being able to do it; it’s about being able to believe in yourself enough that you can do it.”

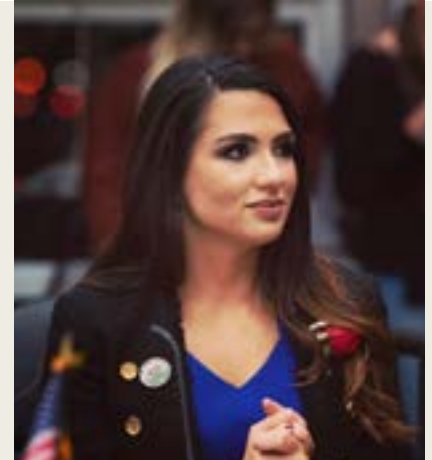
*Denotes former role

STEPHANIE MARTINS

City Council, City of Everett Ward 2

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Brazilian American



Public Service Highlights

In 2017, Stephanie Martins became the first Latina elected to the Everett City Council and the first freshman Councilor appointed Public Safety Committee Chair. Stephanie answered the call to run for public office after over seven years of activism, working on various know-your-rights campaigns, driving political education efforts in disenfranchised communities, serving on statewide political campaigns, and volunteering on voter registration and citizenship drives. While in UMassBoston's Gender, Leadership and Public Policy Graduate Program, her research focused on policy solutions for housing affordability and included an internship in the Massachusetts Legislature's Judiciary Committee. With serving her community as one of her biggest passions, Stephanie has mentored children and teens as a Big Sister and provided assistance to domestic violence survivors, seniors, at-risk-youth, and survivors of the opioid epidemic as a Universal Church volunteer. Among her awards and recognitions are: El Mundo Boston Latino 30 Under 30, Latinx Amplifier, Amplify Latinx Brazilian Political Activism Award, and Notable Brazilian Award.

In Her Own Words

"No Permission, no apologies."

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

- Chair, Public Safety Committee, Everett City Council
- Member, School Reopening Steering Committee
- Member, Advisory Board, Business Law Academy at Everett High School
- Member, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity Commission

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

- Vice President, Everett Kiwanis Club
- Chair, Everett Democratic Committee, Ward 2
- Chair, Everett Affordable Housing Task Force
- Chair, Citizenship and Participation, Brazilian Citizens Council
- Chair, Women's Caucus, Young Democrats of Massachusetts*

Educational Background

- Gender, Leadership, and Public Policy Graduate Certificate, UMass Boston
- BA, Harvard University Extension School

Current Position

Manager/Owner, Dream Builder Development Corp

*Denotes former role

JUANA MATIAS

State Representative, Massachusetts Legislature 16th Essex

2016-2018

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

One of the first Latina immigrant women elected to the Massachusetts Legislature, Juana Matias served as State Representative from Lawrence. With a professional background in social work and in law, former Rep. Matias worked to make college affordable, protect immigrant rights, promote access to minority-owned and women-owned businesses, address inequities in public school systems, and expand opportunities for working class Americans. She has received numerous honors and awards including: Young Champion of Justice Award from the Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Coalition, Las Primeras Award from the Massachusetts Hispanic Attorneys Association (“MAHA”), City of Lawrence Hispanic Heritage Month Public Service Award, and El Mundo Boston’s “30 Under 30.” She was the first Latina to run for Congress in Massachusetts (MA-3rd) in 2018 and placed fourth out of ten in the Democratic primary.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Board of Directors, UTEC

Board of Directors, Amplify Latinx

Board of Corporators, Eastern Bank

Board Member, The Community Group

Member, Joint Committees on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure;
Labor and Workforce Development; Public Safety and Homeland Security*

Member, House Committee on Personnel and Administration*

Social Worker, Lawrence Department of Children & Families*

Student Attorney, Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Latinas Learning to Lead Fellowship Program*

Justice AmeriCorps Legal Advocate, Central West Justice Center*

Educational Background

JD, Suffolk University Law School

BA, University of Massachusetts Boston

Current Position

Chief Operating Officer, MassINC

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“When I need to ground myself as “la primera,” I often think of this quote by the first African American Governor, former Virginia Governor Douglas Wilder, who once said, “Being first isn’t worth a dime if there isn’t a second.”

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

Ogretta 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.

JULIA MEJIA

City Council, City of Boston At-Large

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Dominican Afro-Latina



Public Service Highlights

As a life long advocate for justice and equity as well as government accountability and civic engagement, Councilor Mejia strives to be a trusted voice for her community. Raised in Boston by her single mother after immigrating from the Dominican Republic, Councilor Mejia is the first Afro-Latina elected to the Boston City Council. Winning her seat by one vote, she currently chairs the Committee on Civil Rights as well as Small Business and Workforce Development. In her role, she works to uplift the voices of those least heard and remain true to her motto of “All Means All.”

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Civil Rights Committee

Chair, Small Business and Workforce Development Committee

Committee Member, Arts Culture and Special Events; Census and Redistricting; Government Operations; Strong Women, Families and Communities; Ways and Means

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

CEO, Founder, Collaborative Parent Leadership Action Network*

Founder, Determined Divas*

Consultant, Boston Department of Early Childhood and Secondary Education*

Educational Background

BA, Mount Ida College

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“They’ll tell you you’re too loud, that you need to wait your turn and ask the right people for permission. Do it anyway.”

-Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

“My mother did not raise me to ask for permission to lead.”

-Rep. Ayanna Pressley

“My drive...is born out of an urgency to lift the voices of those drowned out by political insiders who have dominated the conversation about the direction and future of our city.”

-Boston City Councilor Julia Mejia

RITA MENDES

City Council, City of Brockton

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Brazilian American



Public Service Highlights

The first Brazilian American to hold office in Brockton, Rita Mendes has become a leading Brazilian American Attorney on the South Shore with both a thriving law practice and a real estate agency. Born in Brazil, Councilor Mendes came to the United States when she was 12 years old without speaking English. She is an American success story and a shining example of what hard work and diligence can accomplish. She was elected At-Large Councilor in 2019 and prioritizes community engagement, accountability, and transparency.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Traffic Committee

Member, Real Estate Committee

Member, Finance Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Pro Bono Attorney, New England Community Center

Educational Background

JD, New England Law

BA, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Current Position

Rita Mendes Law Office

In Her Own Words

"I Can Do All Things Through Christ Who Strengthens Me"

Philippians 4:13

LEILA BHATTI MIGLIORELLI

City Council, City of Melrose At-Large

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Pakistani and Irish/Italian



Public Service Highlights

In January 2020, Leila Migliorelli was sworn in as Councilor-at-Large in the City of Melrose and is only the second person of color to serve on the council in the history of the city. Focused on the pillars of fiscal responsibility, healthy infrastructure, smart growth and development, and diverse community, Councilor Migliorelli aims to be a voice for all of the city's residents.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice Chair, Appropriations Committee

Chair, Finance Committee

Member, Melrose Human Rights Commission*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Manager, Corporate & Foundation Relations, Center for Women and Enterprise*

Volunteer, Melrose Education Foundation*

Educational Background

MPP, Tufts University

BA, Providence College

Current Position

Director of Stewardship and Donor Relations, Tufts University

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"The world has changed in many ways, and not at all in others, since I ran for office in 2019. My advice to aspiring women of color leaders is to embrace these challenging times and take that chance to run for office. Your communities need your voice at the table to represent those who aren't being heard."

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 5th Suffolk

2019-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Cape Verdean American



Public Service Highlights

Elizabeth "Liz" Miranda is an example of what can become of Boston's young people when they are given the opportunity to rise above their circumstances. A first-generation Cape Verdean-American and lifelong Roxbury resident, Liz has spent her entire life in the district she now represents, which includes neighborhoods in Roxbury and Dorchester. Liz has had a nearly 20-year career in both community organizing and youth development. As an activist, community organizer, philanthropist, educator, nonprofit executive, and now legislator, she has always promoted resident-led change. In order to make the Commonwealth of Massachusetts more equitable, Liz hopes that her representation and voice will elevate marginalized citizens to be a part of a government that values opportunity for all. Her priority issues include maternal justice, immigration rights, environmental justice, criminal justice reform, gun violence prevention, mental health and trauma, and education and out of school time.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Committees on the Judiciary; Veterans and Federal Affairs; Public Safety and Homeland Security; Community Development and Small Businesses

Member, Ellen Story Commission on Postpartum Depression

Member, Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus; Progressive Caucus; Portuguese Caucus; Women's Caucus; Food Caucus

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Lifetime Member, NAACP

Member, National Council of State Legislators, Women in Government, National Council of Black State Legislators, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Boston Alumnae Chapter, Board of Score4more, Inc., Roxbury Historical Society Board, Union Capital Boston Board, We Are Better Together Board

Director of Youth Opportunity Development, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI)*

Executive Director, Hawthorne Youth and Community Center*

Educational Background

BA, Wellesley College

Nonprofit Management Certificate, Institute of Nonprofit Practice, Tufts University

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Public service is both a privilege and a responsibility. My advice to aspiring women of color who want to be in public office is to lead with your heart and remember that our roles are more than titles - they are the very stepping stones that will keep our communities moving forward."

HELEN HAERHAN MOON

City Council, City of Pittsfield Ward 1

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Asian American



Public Service Highlights

Helen Moon was elected to be Ward 1 City Councilor in Pittsfield in 2017. Her public service has involved working at Loaves and Fishes, to traveling abroad to Oaxaca, Mexico to teach English in youth summer camps to Cairo, Egypt and participating in women's empowerment groups. Councilor Moon is working to improve the level of inclusiveness and diversity within the city. During her first term, she has prioritized rejuvenation of the Tyler Street/ Morningside area through the state-sponsored Transformative Development Initiative. A passionate advocate for youth, her policy priorities also entail the environment, education, and health care.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Community and Economic Development; Public Health and Safety; Public Works Committees, Pittsfield City Council

Director of Special Projects, Berkshire County District Attorney's Office*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, NAACP

Member, American Federation of Teachers Union

Member, Indivisible Pittsfield

Member, League of Women Voters

Member, Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus

Volunteer, The Hoping Machine

Residential and School Councilor, Germaine Lawrence, Arlington*

Volunteer, Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry, Somerville*

Educational Background

BS, Elms College

BA, University of Massachusetts Boston

Current Position

Nurse, Critical Care Unit, Fairview Hospital

In Her Own Words

“With a diverse group of people at the top, progress happens much quicker. It goes to the fact that many ideas and many backgrounds would contribute to the force driving the city ahead.”

LATONIA MONROE NAYLOR

School Committee, City of Springfield

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Co-founder of two nonprofit organizations, School Committee Member Naylor has served youth and families in Springfield for over two decades. As a mentor to youth and young adults, she has been active in her church and community, establishing initiatives such as computer learning centers and youth summer programs. Her priorities on the School Committee include participating in the Budget & Finance, Curriculum & Programs, Safety Concerns subcommittees.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice Chair, Minority Caucus, Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Board Member, Racial Imbalance Advisory Council, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Board Member, The Young Scholars Fund, Inc.

Board Chair, Parent Villages, Inc.

Board Member, Springfield Partners for Community Action

Board Chair, Technology Subcommittee

Board Member, Demographics Special Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Co-Founder, Parent Villages

Co-Founder, VITAL Center

Educational Background

MS, Bay Path College

BA, Our Lady of the Elms College

Current Position

Director, AmeriCorps, Springfield College; Adjunct Faculty Member, Springfield College and Worcester State University

In Her Own Words

"Live a life of learning something new every day. Don't hold what you learn hostage, but use it to empower those around you with empathy, passion, and consideration for all people. Although many of our battles often seem invisible, no one ever wins a battle alone. For we must fight together because it still takes as a village."

DUONG NGUYEN

School Committee, Town of Randolph

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Vietnamese American



Public Service Highlights

A resident of Randolph for 16 years, Duong Nguyen works as a business owner in the insurance industry as well as a real estate agent. School Committee Member Nguyen was motivated to seek a seat on the School Committee after learning that Randolph's school system is lacking. She has prioritized ensuring student success by strengthening the town's after school program and spearheading a mentorship program.

Educational Background

BS, University of Toronto

Current Position

Financial Consultant, World of Financial Group (WFG)

In Her Own Words

"People don't plan to fail, they just fail to plan."

TRAM NGUYEN

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 18th Essex District

2019-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Vietnamese American



Public Service Highlights

A first generation Vietnamese American immigrant who was the first in her family to attend college, Representative Nguyen is the first Vietnamese American woman elected to the Massachusetts Legislature.

Prior to her election, Representative Nguyen was a Legal Aid Attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services, advocating for domestic violence survivors, veterans, children, workers, and persons with disabilities. She has engaged in advocacy for statewide coalitions, lawmakers and governing bodies to push for laws that address racial and economic justice and protect the rights of the most vulnerable populations. She is the recipient of the Lawrence Bar Association Merit Award, Reginald Heber Smith Award, and Vietnamese American Bar Association Public Service Award.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, House Committee on Personnel and Administration

Member, Joint Committees on Housing; Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery; Municipalities and Regional Government

Partnership Specialist, U.S. Census Bureau*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Legal Aid Attorney, Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS)*

Member, UAW Local 2320*

Fellow, Equal Justice Works*

Fellow, New Leaders Council*

Educational Background

JD, Northeastern University School of Law

BA, Tufts University

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“When I initially considered a run for State Representative, I was told that it was not my time and to set my expectations lower. But I knew that I had a valuable perspective as a woman of color, a political refugee, and a legal aid attorney to contribute to the discussions at the State House, and that I could use my voice to be a strong advocate for my district.”

School Committee, City of Salem

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Israeli, Mexican American,
Mexican Indigenous, Palestinian



Public Service Highlights

Ana Nuncio has been a leader in the Salem community through her work with the Latino Leadership Coalition helping register voters, translate public service announcements for the city, and advancing voting rights for Salem’s Latino community. She has also developed and implemented Spanish language programs for Salem public schools before becoming a member of the School Committee.

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

President, Latino Leadership Coalition

Winner, Essex Heritage Special Recognition Award

Educational Background

BA, Roosevelt University

Current Position

Manager of Settlement Partnerships, The House of the Seven Gables

In Her Own Words

“We can change the narrative by emphasizing those strengths that come from our diverse population.”

BRANDY OAKLEY-FLUKER

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 12th Suffolk

2021-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black



Public Service Highlights

Elected in 2020, Representative Brandy Fluker Oakley serves parts of Dorchester, Hyde Park, Mattapan, and Milton in the 12th Suffolk seat. Born and raised in Boston by a single mother from the segregated south, Brandy has a long-standing passion for social justice and organized her first protest in the third grade. With a career dedicated to advocacy, education equity, and progressive causes, she has professionally worked as an organizer, executive director, and everything in between. A practicing attorney, Brandy's work solidified her belief in the power of democracy and that communities are more than capable of identifying solutions to address their most pressing needs and challenges. Her legislative priorities include policies to reverse wrongful convictions, support people who are incarcerated upon re-entry, secure one fair wage for tipped workers, and provide reliable and carbon-neutral public transit to underserved communities.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Transportation; Judiciary; Community Development & Small Business; Racial Equity, Civil Rights & Inclusion Committees

Representative, Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus; Women's Legislative Caucus Executive Board

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Founder & President, Delighting in Gods Ministries

Member, NAACP

Member, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Board Member, Dorchester YMCA

Member, Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association & Women's Bar Association

Executive Director, Educators for Excellence*

Member, Mattahunt Community Center Advisory Board in partnership with Wheelock College*

Educational Background

MEd, Johns Hopkins University

JD, Emory University School of Law

BA & BS, Syracuse University

Current Position

Partner, The Management Center; Attorney, Law Office of Brenda A. Fluker

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“We live in a society that diminishes the contributions and belittles the efforts of women, and it is easy to succumb to these notions and rhetoric. Feelings of imposter syndrome and doubt may creep into our minds, but those feelings should never persist and never win. Our work, our contributions, and our efforts are important, worthy, and valuable. Navigating the world as a Black woman indeed has its challenges, but there is nothing insurmountable that women of color cannot overcome especially when we support one another.”

*Denotes former role

TAMIKA OLSZEWSKI

School Committee, City of Newton Ward 4

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black/Afro Caribbean



Public Service Highlights

An attorney by profession and an actively involved civic leader, Tamika Olszewski was the top vote-getter on a crowded ballot when elected to the Newton School Committee in November 2019. She attributes her victory to a shared vision for the values she represents on the School Committee, celebrating differences as a point of pride. One of the founders of the Newton Coalition of Black Residents, an advocacy group focused on sharing information and facilitating connection among its members, she is devoted to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. A native Jamaican and the mother of ten-year-old twins, her priorities include creating welcoming environments for students to learn.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Commissioner, Newton Human Rights Commission

Executive Board Member, Families Organizing for Racial Justice

Executive Board Member, The Harmony Foundation

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Founder, Newton Coalition of Black Residents

Educational Background

JD, University of Baltimore School of Law

BA, University of Pittsburgh

In Her Own Words

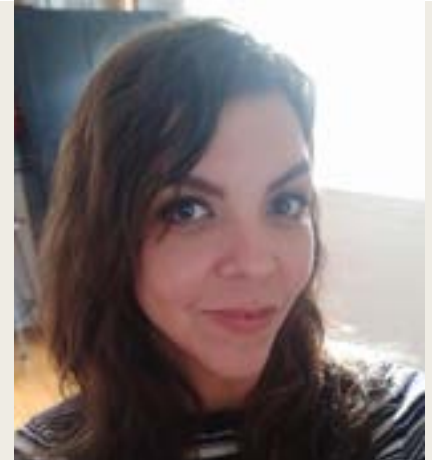
“Stand for your convictions, even if you are the only person in the room standing. If you stand long enough, holding tightly to the strength of your values, others will rise and join you.”

ANASTASIA ORDONEZ

Amherst School Committee, Town of Amherst Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee

2016-2020

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Elected Chair of the School Committee in 2018, Anastasia Ordonez, who served an extended term on the Amherst School Committee and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee, worked to improve the annual budget process and build a partnership with school unions to establish an interest-based bargaining process to enhance contract negotiations. Additionally, she advocated for a restorative justice program in the regional schools and ensured a robust community consensus process for the building of new elementary schools.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Amherst School Committee

Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Amherst Media

Board Member, Collaborative for Educational Services

Communications Director, Children's and Families Program*

Next Generation

Educational Background

BA, Rutgers University

MA, Rutgers University

Current Position

Director of Communications, Marketing, and Web, College of Natural Sciences,
UMass Amherst

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"We grow up thinking that we're not rich enough, smart enough, or prepared enough for public office. But you are more than enough, and we need you at the table for the good of our communities."

KEIKO MATSUDO ORRALL

State Representative, Massachusetts Legislature 12th Bristol District

2011-2019

Racial/Ethnic Background: Japanese American



Public Service Highlights

Keiko Matsudo Orrall of Lakeville, Massachusetts became the first Asian American woman to be elected to the Massachusetts Legislature in 2011. She served four terms as a State Representative and was the first minority woman to seek constitutional office in her 2018 bid to become Massachusetts State Treasurer. In 2019, she received the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays from the Emperor of Japan acknowledging the importance of the work she has done to strengthen relations between the two countries. Keiko served as the Massachusetts Republican National Committee woman from 2016 to 2020. She currently serves on the White House Asian American Pacific Islanders President's Advisory Commission. Keiko is also the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism and the Chairman of the Massachusetts Marketing Partnership.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Joint Committees on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies; Labor and Workforce Development; 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, Japan Society of Boston

Member, US-Japan Council

Educational Background

BA, Smith College

Current Position

Executive Director, Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism

Chairman, Massachusetts Marketing Partnership

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“We can do it! It is important 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

City Council, City of Lawrence District A

2016-2018

City Council, City of Lawrence District A

2014-2016

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

As a member of the Lawrence School Committee, Myra Ortiz took pride in advocating for the children of Lawrence and was a strong proponent of developing civic awareness in public schools. An Honoree at the Greater Lawrence YWCA's Tribute to Women in 2015, she became District A Councilor on the Lawrence City Council in 2016. As a City Councilor, she leveraged community partnerships to grow economic opportunities. She collaborated with department supervisors to implement a strategic capital improvement plan and developed expertise in on a range of topics, including collective bargaining, urban economic development, and community policing.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Personnel Committee, Lawrence City Council*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Treasurer/Financial Literacy Educator, The Dream Network

Financial Coach, Best Buddies*

Advisory Board Member, The Salvation Army*

Budget Committee Member, Esperanza Academy*

Board Member, Greater Lawrence Community Action Council*

Educational Background

MEd, Merrimack College

BS, Southern New Hampshire University

AS, Northern Essex Community College

Current Position

Contractor, Wilmington Public Schools

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.

CHRISTINA PAUL

School Committee, Town of Randolph

2019-2020

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black

Public Service Highlights

Raised in Alabama and mother of six, Christina Paul was elected in 2018 to the Randolph School Committee after running a zero-dollar campaign relying on community relations and one-on-one conversations. During her two-year term, School Committee Member Paul worked fiercely to tackle difficult and often controversial issues. Through her service she combined her policy acumen and human rights training to dismantle harmful policies to poor families and students of color. She worked to ensure that no child or family would be treated differently nor penalized for an inability to afford school lunch. This work to disrupt food insecurity led the Randolph Public School District to secure free lunch for families between 2019 and 2021. Paul continues to be an active leader in the community, serving as Secretary of the Randolph Democratic Town Committee and working with many other advocacy organizations that confront issues of poverty, equal justice and other issues of concern for people of color, women, children, and poor people.

In Her Own Words

"Equality is not an accessory. It is a necessity, like the air we breathe. There is no good reason to prevent it for ourselves or others."

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice President of the School Committee; Vice President of the Finance Committee*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Secretary, Randolph Democratic Town Committee

Human Resources Director, Eastern Nazarene College

Educational Background

Northeastern University (Human Resources Management Certificate)

Southern New Hampshire University

MARIA PEREZ

School Committee, City of Springfield

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

As a political community activist, Maria has dedicated more than 35 years of her life to the enrichment and empowerment of the Latino community. Her work has included serving as one of the founders of both the Puerto Rican Day Parade and the Heritage Association. She has worked for the New North Citizens Council for over 30 years and is currently the Director of Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Commissioner, Board of Appeals, City of Springfield*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Founder and Chairwoman, Madres Latinas Organization

Founder and Chairwoman, Women on the Vanguard Organization

Vice-Chair, Springfield Partners for Community Action Inc.*

President, Spanish Merchants Association*

Educational Background

BA, Springfield College

Current Position

Director of Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS, New North Citizens Council

In Her Own Words

Maria is known for her favorite saying, “Por el Pueblo, Para el Pueblo, Con el Pueblo” which translates, I am for the Community, I stand by the Community, and I am with the Community.

ROSA PEREZ

School Committee, City of Springfield District 1

2014-2017

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

In 2013, Rosa Perez won a seat on the Springfield School Committee by beating an incumbent. She supported 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 Committee woman 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

2012-2018

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

Board Member, Newton-Needham Regional Chamber of Commerce

Member, Cabot Elementary School Council *

Chair, Newton METCO Scholarship Committee*

Chair, Cabot Technology Committee*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Social Media Consultant, Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce

Member, Board of Trustees, Myrtle Baptist Church*

Educational Background

MS, Boston University

BS, Boston University

Current Position

Founder & CEO, LiveWire Collaborative, A Digital Marketing 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

United States House of Representatives Massachusetts 7th

2019-Present

City Council, City of Boston At-Large

2010-2019

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black



Public Service Highlights

As the Representative for the Massachusetts 7th Congressional District, Congresswoman Pressley is the first woman of color ever elected to represent the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in Congress. Prior to being elected to Congress, Pressley was the first woman of color ever elected to the Boston City Council, on which she served four terms as an At-Large Councilor. During her first term on the Council, Pressley created and chaired the Committee on Healthy Women, Families, and Communities. She previously served as an aide to Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy II and U.S. Senator John Kerry.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, House Committee on Financial Services (Subcommittees: Consumer Protection and Financial Institutions; Diversity and Inclusion)

Member, House Committee on Oversight and Reform (Subcommittees: Economic and Consumer Policy (Vice-Chair); Civil Rights and Civil Liberties)

Chair, Abortion Rights and Access Task Force

Vice-Chair, Aging and Families Task Force

Founding Co-Chair, Future of Transportation Caucus

Founding Member, Black Maternal Health Caucus

Chair, Committee on Women & Healthy Communities, Vice Chair, Committee on Public Safety Committee and Special Committee on Federal Stimulus Oversight, Boston City Council*

Senior Aide, Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy; U.S. Senator John Kerry*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Massachusetts Constituency Director, John Kerry for President*

Educational Background

BA, Boston University (attended)

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

2014-2015

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, School Committee Ramirez 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, Mass Humanities

Board Member, Greater Worcester Community Foundation

Board Member, YWCA, Central Massachusetts

Executive Director, Worcester Youth Center*

Board Member, Leadership Worcester*

Founder, Latino History Project of Worcester*

Board Member, Center for Creative Leadership in Colorado Institute*

Educational Background

MA, Harvard Graduate School of Education

BS, Lesley University

Certificates, National Hispana Leadership Institute Center for Creative Leadership, Colorado Springs

Current Position

Executive Director, Latino Education Institute, Worcester State University

Electoral Significance

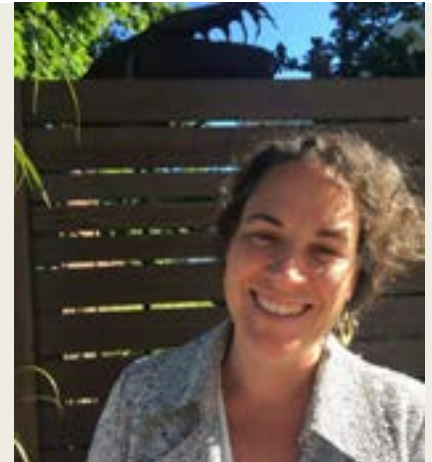
Hilda Ramirez was one of the first Latinas to have been elected to municipal office in Worcester.

ESTELLE RAND

City Council, City of Beverly Ward 2

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican and Caucasian (French/Irish)



Public Service Highlights

With a clear passion and skill for building community and extensive experience in establishing community partnerships and reaching consensus, Councilor Rand is a dedicated community leader well known for her work as the founder and director of the Beverly Farmers' Market and four terms of service on the Beverly City Council. She has shown a commitment to building Beverly's identity as an inclusive city by authoring an ordinance to establish a Human Rights Committee and ensuring that any marginalized group in Beverly has additional support in bringing public awareness to their concerns. A consistent voice for equity and justice, Estelle is also well known for her work in supporting the arts and culture through policy and advocacy. She is actively engaged in human rights, racial justice and equity, and environmental activities. As a musician, she has a deep understanding of the importance of expressing our cultural stories as a community.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice President, Beverly City Council

Member, Finance and Property Committee

Member, Harbor Management Authority

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Director, Beverly Farmers' Market

Member, Ward 2 Civic Association

Educational Background

BA, Colgate University

Current Position

Librarian Aide, Thorpe Elementary School

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Trust in your vision of the community change that we need. Your perspective, talent, and leadership will be the keys to a future of justice and equity; I believe in you."

BRIDGET RAY-CANADA

School Committee, City of Newton Ward 1

2017-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Elected in 2016, Bridget Ray-Canada is serving in her second term and currently Vice Chair of the Newton School Committee. Passionate about helping students be their best, regardless of background or economic status, she has been involved in many organizations and initiatives that celebrate and embrace diversity to ensure that all students feel connected to the school community, are expected to achieve, and are taught from a cultural proficient lens. She is involved in reviewing and aligning district initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion through reducing disproportionate identification of students of color for special education, promote students of color in higher-level math, support first generation college students, and update interview questions and hiring protocol to increase the pool of diverse candidates in the school system.

In Her Own Words

“Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it.” –Maya Angelou

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Mentor, Transitioning Together (T2)

Newton Coalition of Black Residents

Member, Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO)

Board Member, Spelman College Alumnae Association

Educational Background

MBA, Georgia State University

BS, Georgia Tech

BS, Spelman College

Current Position

Global Product Manager, Cabot Corporation

DANA REBEIRO

City Council, City of New Bedford

2014-2019

Racial/Ethnic Background: Cape Verdean



Public Service Highlights

First elected in 2013 to the New Bedford City Council, Dana Rebeiro served three terms and did not seek re-election in 2019 as a firm believer in term limits. During her tenure, she brought in the \$3.4 million refrigeration to the Pier which allows the longshoremens to work throughout the year—a boost to not only the Southcoast but the entire Commonwealth. She authored an ordinance to allow the city to be able to issue licenses for the ever-growing aquaculture industry. While working for the people of New Bedford, she began consulting and co-hosted a public access show that discussed politics and issues in the Commonwealth. Councilor Rebeiro worked to stymie the effects of gentrification by hosting several foreclosure clinics to help her constituents keep their homes. She also hosted job fairs and small business seminars aimed to assist women and minorities. It was her work advocating for homeowners that caught the attention of MAAPL (Massachusetts Alliance Against Predatory Lending) and she began consulting for them, while cohosting a radio show as well as a cable access show that focused on politics. Currently, Dana is the Massachusetts Liaison for Vineyard Wind and is working to bring clean renewable energy to the area.

In Her Own Words

Shirley Chisholm said, “If they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.” I love that and, in 2020, I would like to add bring several chairs and women who don’t traditionally get there to sit in them next to you!

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

- Member, AHA! (Art, History & Architecture), Steering Committee
- Member, Cape Verdean Association
- Member, Bus Riders United
- Member, United Families for Peace Volunteer, Operation Cleansweep
- Outreach Officer, Massachusetts Democratic Party*

Educational Background

- MA, Tufts University
- BA, Howard University

Current Position

Consultant, Massachusetts Alliance Against Predatory Lending

*Denotes former role

CELINA REYES

City Council, City of Lawrence At-Large

2017-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Dominican



Public Service Highlights

A family childcare educator who has served in various leadership roles in her community, Councilor Reyes cites giving back to her community as one of her passions. She was instrumental in fighting for change by participating in the minimum wage increase campaign in the state, paid medical family leave campaign, and other social justice campaigns, including Black Lives Matter Protest, March for Our Lives, Women's March, and Domestic Violence March. She believes that taking part in activism is important as it shows children that changes can result from such advocacy.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chapter President, SEIU Local 509

Member, SEIU Bargaining Committee

Member, Pueblo Verde, and the Latino Caucus Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Neighborhood Community Organizer, Lawrence Community Works

Member, SEIU Lawrence Community Action Member, COPE Committee

Volunteer, Senior Center, Lawrence*

Educational Background

BSc, Springfield College

Current Position

Educator of Family Child Care, Child Development Inc.

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"If you work hard, anything is possible." I have tried to teach my children this value my whole life. Being that I was a teenage mother who immigrated here at only 16 years old with my son, I faced a lot of adversaries in order to get to where I am today. However, I beat the odds with my hard work and dedication. With hard work, you can accomplish anything!

PENNY RICKETTS

City Council, City of Greenfield

2014-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

A City Councilor for the City of Greenfield, Penny Ricketts (Penrick) has served as Council Vice President and Chair of the Council's Economic Development Subcommittee. She currently sits on the boards of The Literacy Project, Greenfield Business Association, and New England Learning Center for Women in Transition. Penny has received many awards and accolades for her community work including the prestigious Rotary Club Paul Harris distinction. The Martin Luther King Jr. Living the Dream award holds the most significance and, due to the pandemic, the presentation has been postponed but not her spirit to live up to it. Penny has two children, Corey and Vanessa.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Appointments and Ordinance Committee

Member, Community Relations and Education Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Greenfield Business Association

Board Member, The Literacy Project

Board Member, New England Learning Center for Women in Transition

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"It seems my legacy is going to be the "first" Black woman in all that I have and will achieve in my community. It's now on me to reach back and bring other strong women along."

"It should be the honor and duty of every woman to make sure there is always a seat at the table for more women of color."

CYNTHIA RIVAS MENDES

School Committee, City of Brockton Ward 2

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican and Dominican



Public Service Highlights

Cynthia Rivas Mendes is a homeowner, educator, and the parent of a future Brockton student. She won her election against a former Brockton School Committee member who left in 2012 to run for Brockton City Council. She is working to ensure cultural competence across the Brockton school system given the city's diverse community.

Educational Background

MS, Boston University

BS, College of the Holy Cross

Current Position

Special Education Math Teacher, Boston Public Schools

Electoral Significance

Cynthia Rivas Mendes is the first woman of color, the first Latina, and the first Dominican and Puerto Rican elected to the Brockton School Committee.

MARIANELA RIVERA

School Committee, City of Lawrence

2016-2020

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican



Public Service Highlights

Dr. Marianela Rivera served two terms on the Lawrence School Committee after deciding to run at the final hour as a sticker campaign because of her experience as a special education physical therapist working within the Lawrence Public School system under receivership. Dr. Rivera became elected Vice Chair by her colleagues during her second term and dedicated her public service to providing civic education, empowering her community members, and fighting for education justice. A 2020 candidate for State Representative, Dr. Rivera worked to unseat the incumbent of the 17th Essex communities of Lawrence, Andover, and Methuen.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Commissioner, Essex County Commission on the Status of Women

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Citizens for Public Schools

Member, Bread Loaf Teachers Network

Table Coordinator, Greater Lawrence Education Justice Alliance

Director of Educational Initiatives and Board Member, The Dream Network*

Educational Background

MA (in process), Bread Loaf School of English

DPT, Northeastern University

BS, Northeastern University

Current Position

Physical Therapist, Peabody Public Schools

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"I am proud to stand on the shoulders of giants who have led the way for women to run for office, but we are currently underrepresented at the State House. We need more strong women to step into their power and run for office. The best leaders don't create followers. They create more leaders and I'm hoping to inspire the next generation to rise up to be the change we wish to see."

NATASHA RIVERA

School Committee, Town of Maynard

2019-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican, Portuguese, Taino



Public Service Highlights

Natasha Rivera first ran for Maynard School Committee in 2019 for a one-year seat which she won and was re-elected to a three-year term in 2020. School Committee Member Rivera brings to her work on the School Committee a professional background in regulations and compliance. She is working to ensure that district initiatives are planned with a clear long-term trajectory path, while also advocating collectively as a town to improve the appropriate funding path for the town's schools during these tenuous financial times. She also prioritizes the strengthening of core service needs for all students and staff and emphasizes fiscal stewardship of taxpayer dollars, transparency in governance, and continuous improvement to social-emotional learning.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Maynard Special Education Parent Advisory Committee

Member, Negotiations; Budget Subcommittees

Liaison, Finance Committee

Member, Communications Task Force

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Green Meadow School Council*

Educational Background

BA, Louisiana State University

Current Position

Nonresident Alien Compliance Manager, Harvard University

In Her Own Words

“I am someone that has demonstrated an ability to bring varying perspectives together, to unite what feels broken in some sense. My aim for constant collaboration with all folks, whenever and wherever, doesn't appear only during election season.”

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. Working with diverse constituencies is a high priority and her main areas of focus since elected in 2011 have been education and youth development. Currently serving her fifth two-year term, Councilor Rivera has worked professionally in the Worcester community in the field of human services and mental health since 1988 and has extensive experience in the areas of community mental health, and interventions for multicultural populations in urban settings as well as community organizing.

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

Electoral Significance

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

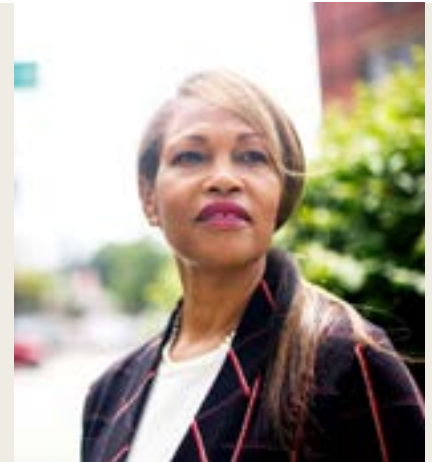
“My focus will always be on improving the lives of the citizens of Malden and ensuring that our city is a safe, vibrant community to live, work and play.”

DEBRA ROBERTS

Select Board, Town of Stoughton

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Elected to the Stoughton Select Board in 2020, Debra Roberts is a leader in the community and has been active on issues of diversity and inclusion. As Chairperson of Stoughton's Diversity & Inclusion Organization, she helps lead the annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Day Celebration and organize peaceful protests to address racial injustice. Selectwoman Roberts was recognized as a 2020 Commonwealth Heroine.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Town Meeting Representative

Member, Finance and Taxation Committee*

Member, Board of Assessors*

Member, Board of Governors Old Colony YMCA*

Vice-Chair, Capital and Financial Planning Committee*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Chairperson, Stoughton Diversity & Inclusion Organization

Executive Board Member, Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts*

President, National Association of Black Accountants, Inc. – Boston Chapter*

Educational Background

MBA, Northeastern University

BS, Fontbonne University

Current Position

Finance Manager, National Telecommuting Institute Inc. (NTI Inc.)

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Discover your passion first, then look at your talents and set a game plan to allow you to help in the lives of others. There is always a place for you to be a leader and make a difference.”

MARIA D. ROBINSON

State Representative, Massachusetts Legislature 6th Middlesex District

2019-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Korean American



Public Service Highlights

As the first Korean American elected to the Massachusetts General Court, Representative Robinson brings her expertise in the clean energy sector to her role as a lawmaker. In addition to advancing renewable energy measures, her priorities include ensuring access to truly affordable health care, providing access to high-quality education, preserving LGBTQ+ rights, protecting consumers and their data, and providing affordable options for seniors. She brings a wealth of knowledge and experience related to renewable energy policy and regulations from leading Advanced Energy Economy's program on wholesale markets to her work with the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources on the deployment of solar panels at municipal water and wastewater facilities to providing expert testimony for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, House Committee on Technology and Intergovernmental Affairs

Member, Joint Committees on Cannabis Policy; Export Development; State Administration and Regulatory Oversight

Member, National Caucus of Environmental Legislators (NCEL)

Member, Clean Air Act Environmental Legislators (CAAAC)

Member, Town Meeting, Framingham*

Intern, U.S. Representative (now Governor) Jay Inslee*

Intern, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Framingham Public Library Foundation and Friends of the Framingham Library*

Member, Framingham Democratic Town Committee*

Lifetime Member, Girl Scouts of the USA*

Educational Background

MS, University of Tulsa

SB, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“Never assume you aren't qualified enough to do something; with enough passion and determination, you are capable of achieving your goals and certainly capable of being elected to office!”

RACHAEL ROLLINS

District Attorney, Suffolk County

2019-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Black and Irish American



Public Service Highlights

The first woman elected District Attorney of Suffolk County and the first woman of color to ever serve as a Massachusetts District Attorney, DA Rachael Rollins is working to effect reforms to reduce incarceration, correct racial and ethnic disparities, adopt alternatives to traditional prosecution, prioritize limited resources to address serious and violent crimes, and improve relationships between law enforcement and communities. Since elected, she has implemented a policy of presumptively dismissing and/or diverting certain low-level misdemeanor charges and made changes to ensure that all community members have equal access to justice through the courts. She has revolutionized how police-involved fatalities are reviewed by appointing an outside panel of investigators. She is the recipient of the Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association's Trailblazer of the Year Award, was selected as Massachusetts Lawyer's Weekly Attorney of the Year (2018), and received the Ida B. Wells-Barnett Award from the NAACP's Boston Branch.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

General Counsel, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)*

General Counsel, Massachusetts Department of Transportation*

Chief Legal Counsel, Massachusetts Port Authority*

Assistant United States Attorney, Massachusetts*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

President, Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association*

Elected Member, Boston Bar Association Council*

Educational Background

LLM, Georgetown University Law Center

JD, Northeastern University School of Law

BA, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Change is often uncomfortable. If you are fighting for change, you will get pushback; you will be vilified. But remember, real change only happens when we're uncomfortable. We have to live in that discomfort. It's the best shot we have for a better tomorrow."

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

School Committee, 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

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

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, Cambridge College

Current Position

President, MTR Consulting

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 SANGIOILO

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

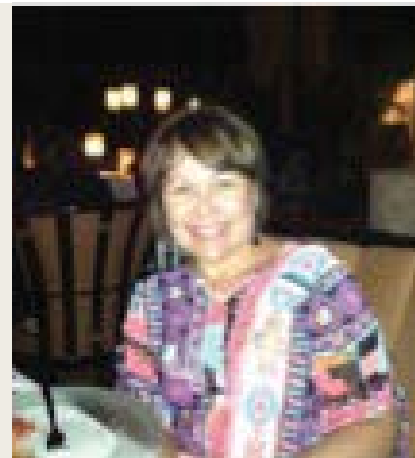
"Don't be afraid to be yourself.
Voters respect honesty."

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.

MARISOL SANTIAGO

School Committee, City of Chelsea District 3

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

A workers' rights activist, School Committee Member Santiago is leading efforts to improve conditions for all living in Chelsea. Her background in politics spans campaign posts at the local and state level, and most recently included Ayanna Pressley's successful campaign for the United States House of Representatives.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Sub-Committee on Curriculum and Instruction

Member, Sub-Committee on Policy and Procedures

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Campaign Manager, Committee to Elect Damali Vidot for Chelsea City Council*

Deputy Campaign Manager, Committee to Elect Roy Avellaneda for State Representative*

Deputy Field Director, Committee to Elect Deval Patrick*

Educational Background

AS, North Shore Community College

DEEPIKA SAWHNEY

School Committee, Town of Lexington

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Asian Indian



Public Service Highlights

In 2018, Deepika Sawhney was elected to the Lexington School Committee and to Town Meeting. She has worked as a parent volunteer for the Lexington Public Schools in different capacities: as a Big Backyard volunteer, STEM coach, PTO president, LEF board member, and has also simply offered an extra pair of hands when needed. Through these roles, she has worked to help create a deeply engaged parent and student community.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Lexington Town Meeting

Member, Finance Sub-committee

Member, Strategic Planning Committee

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

STEM Organizer and Library Volunteer, John W. McCormack Middle School

STEM Experiences Facilitator, Spark Academy

Mentor and Coach, First Lego League

Lead STEM Chair, Coach & Site Council Member, William Diamond Middle School PTA

President Science Club, Robotics Club, Math Club, Fiske Elementary School PTO and Co-chair, Science Fair

Co-Chair, The Hestia Fund

Educational Background

MPM, Harvard Graduate School of Education [current]

MBA, Boston University

MS, Boston University

Diploma in Industrial Design, Textile Design Specialization

Current Position

School Committee Member of Lexington Public Schools and Lexington Town Meeting Member

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Scientific and societal progress needs a plurality of voices to be heard and acknowledged. Given the issues we face today how can we afford to ignore or silence half the world? We need women of all ages, color, ethnicities and countries to lead the way."

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

NeighborMedia Correspondent, Cambridge Community Television

Educational Background

MA Education, Stanford University

BA, Psychology, Stanford University

Current Position

Chief of Staff, Office of the President, MassArt

SUMBUL SIDDIQUI

Mayor, City of Cambridge

2020-Present

City Council, City of Cambridge

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Pakistani



Public Service Highlights

Cambridge Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui was first elected to the City Council in 2017 with the highest votes for any challenger in a 26-candidate race. In 2002, she co-founded the Cambridge Youth Involvement Subcommittee, now the Cambridge Youth Council. Now in its 17th year, the CYC continues to be a platform for youth to advocate on issues that concern them and their community. Her contributions to peacemaking in Cambridge was honored with the Cambridge Peace and Justice Award in 2006. As the State's first Muslim mayor, Mayor Siddiqui has worked to increase affordable housing, prevent tenant displacement, support small businesses, increase civic engagement, and improve the health and safety of the city's neighborhoods, especially its most vulnerable communities. With the City Manager, she has spearheaded coronavirus-related initiatives, including raising and distributing nearly \$5 million in emergency assistance to Cambridge residents and businesses financially impacted by COVID-19, swiftly collaborating with the Broad Institute to test Cambridge nursing home and unhoused residents, building an emergency shelter for the City's unhoused population, collaborating with organizations to provide free meals to CPS students, and convening a small business advisory committee to assist with reopening.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Cambridge Public School Committee

Board Member, Cambridge Rindge & Latin High School Alumni Association

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, South Asian Bar Association of Greater Boston

Member, National Organization of Legal Services Workers (UAW Local 2320)

Member, Women's Bar Association

Host, "Women are Here" Podcast

Educational Background

JD, Northwestern Pritzker School of Law

BA, Brown University

Current Position

Mayor of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Representation matters, and young girls and women of color deserve to know that their experience is valid, their perspective is powerful, and their presence, voice and ideas belong at the table. Not only do we belong, but we are invaluable, necessary agents in creating positive, meaningful change in our communities."

ASIMA SILVA

Wachusett Regional School Committee, Town of Holden

2015-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Indian



Public Service Highlights

In 2015, Asima Silva was elected to the Wachusett Regional School Committee. The mother of five children and a practicing Muslim, she is the founder of EnjoinGood, a nonprofit dedicated to dispelling misconceptions regarding Islam, created after the bullying of her daughter at her school in Holden. A software engineer, School Committee Member Silva is committed to giving back to her community and providing value to those around her through all her endeavors. Her current priorities include safety for all kids (addressing bullying and microaggressions) and academically challenging all children at an individual level, encouraging diversity in schools (to discuss, teach, and welcome all races, religions, cultures, ethnicities, etc.) and Justice for Uighurs (in China), Myanmar (in Burma) and Muslim Indians (in India).

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Subcommittee on Equity, Diversity, and Anti-Racism

Appointed Member, Worcester's Coalition Against Bias and Hate

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Volunteer, Sound Vision; Justice for All; Burma Task Force

Vice President and Board Member, Muslim Caucus of America

Host, Perspectives Radio and TV show

Co-founder and Director of Outreach, EnjoinGood

Member, Central Mass Faith Coalition

Corporator, Greater Worcester Community Foundation

Educational Background

MS, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

BS, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Current Position

Senior Automation Engineer, Rave Mobile Safety

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Knowledge is the root of all good whereas ignorance is the root of all evil."

-Prophet Muhammad

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



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; 2016-2017

School Committee, City of Cambridge

2002-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

In her 9th term on the Cambridge City Council, Councilor Denise Simmons works to ensure affordable housing, civic unity, worker support, public safety, and education as well as to make local government more accessible to a wider range of people. She advocated for ordinance changes to provide greater job protections and wage fairness for city janitors and custodians to provide a stronger example for how all Cambridge employers should be treating their workers. 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. She launched the Cambridge Girls Leadership Group to connect eighth grade girls from across Cambridge with mentors in various careers including business and politics to discuss college readiness and jobs. She has served as Cambridge Mayor for two terms and, 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, Antioch College

BS, University of Massachusetts Boston

Current Position

Owner, Cambridgeport Insurance Agency

Electoral Significance

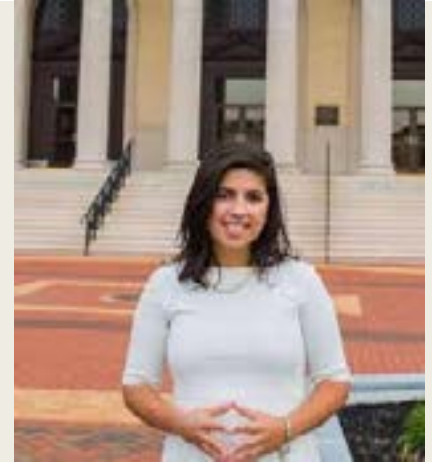
In 2008, Denise Simmons became mayor in the city of Cambridge by the City Council and became the first openly lesbian African-American mayor in country.

PRISCILA SOUSA

School Committee, City of Framingham District 5

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Brazilian



Public Service Highlights

Arriving in Framingham at age seven speaking no English, Priscila Sousa attended Framingham Public Schools through 12th grade. The educational foundation that she had access to through Framingham Public Schools drove her desire to give back to her community. She was elected in 2019 to serve on the Framingham School Committee.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Subcommittee

Liaison, Bilingual Parent Advisory Council; Special Education Parent Advisory Council; Youth Council

Teaching and Learning Subcommittee

Framingham Human Relations Commissioner*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Hoops and Homework

Board Member, Framingham FORCE

Board Member, Amazing Things Arts Center

Member, Team Framingham Steering Committee*

Educational Background

BA, Simmons University

Current Position

Sales Manager, Vivint Solar

JENNIFER SPADAFORA

School Committee, City of Malden Ward 3

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American and Native American



Public Service Highlights

Mother of three, Jennifer Spadafora, who has a background in finance and special needs rights, was elected to the Malden School Committee in 2017. Working to make sure that all children across the City of Malden have a voice, School Committee Member Spadafora has advocated tirelessly for proper school funding, staff and administrative diversity, and for protecting the legal and civil rights of students with disabilities.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Budget Subcommittee

Chair, Social, Emotional and Physical Well-Being Subcommittee

Member, Policy and Procedures; Equity and Opportunity; Negotiations Subcommittees

Liaison, Malden Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Notary Public, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Council of Parents Attorneys and Advocates

Member, Beebe School Council*

Current Position

Controller Assistant, Brown Brothers Harriman

In Her Own Words

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.”

-Aristotle

YVONNE M. SPICER

Mayor, City of Framingham

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

A Framingham resident for more than three decades, Mayor Spicer was elected Mayor in 2017, becoming Framingham's first mayor and the first African American woman to be popularly elected mayor in Massachusetts. Committed to sustainable economic growth, Mayor Spicer's initial accomplishments have included the signing of a police contract –the first since 2016, launching city's first "government academy," and opening and expanding businesses. A long-term public school teacher and administrator, Mayor Spicer served as Vice President for Advocacy and Educational Partnerships at Boston's Museum of Science, building partnerships in STEM education with policymakers, school districts, municipalities, business, and other nonprofit organizations.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Town Meeting Member, Standing Committee on Ways and Means, Town of Framingham*

Member, Massachusetts Business Roundtable*

Member, Massachusetts Office of the Treasurer Economic Empowerment Trust Fund*

Member, Massachusetts Governor's STEM Advisory Council*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

President, International Technology Engineering Education Association

Member, Board of Directors, Plumbing Museum

Educational Background

PhD, University of Massachusetts Boston

MS, State University of New York-Oswego

BA, State University of New York-Oswego

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Over the past three years, women of color have made significant strides in running and winning elected seats across the U.S. While women represent 51% of the population, only a small percentage of the overall people in office are female. And for women of color, that number is even smaller. All women, but especially women of color, are serving and raising the bar on issues of equity, social justice, pay equality, gun violence, affordable housing, immigration, environmental justice, and education. I am honored to serve with my Sisters, and know that each one of us is doing her part to move the needle in our respective communities. However, we need more. After all, each of us is a role model for little black and brown girls. We need to demonstrate the kind of leadership our country aspires to so that one day, we can realize a government that truly reflects America."

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, City of Boston Zoning Board*

Assistant Attorney General*

Assistant District Attorney, Middlesex County*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Board Member, Dorchester Boys and Girls Club; Nativity Preparatory School; Zoo New England Advisory Council; Boston Police Reform Taskforce

Member, Project Hope Board of Directors*

Executive Director, King Boston President and CEO, Bessie Tartt Wilson Initiative for Children*

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

Member, Board of Directors, Suffolk County Child Advocacy Center*

President, Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association*

Educational Background

JD, Boston College

BA, University of Massachusetts Amherst

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

Realtor, Berkshire Hathaway

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 ensure their regular participation in ward meetings.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, 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 HeadStart Policy Council

Member, North Central Massachusetts Community Health Network

Educational Background

BS, DePaul University

Current Position

Trial Attorney, Committee for Public Counsel Services

In Her Own Words

“I wanted to run to give others an opportunity to see that someone like me, a young women of color could do it.”

ANGELA THORPE

Board of Selectmen, Town of East Longmeadow

2013-2016

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, Gordon College

Current Position

Finance Manager, National Telecommuting Institute Inc. (NTI Inc.)

In Her Own Words

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

CHYNAH TYLER

State Representative, Massachusetts Legislature 7th Suffolk

2017-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

Chair of the Boston Delegation and the third female African American elected to represent the 7th Suffolk, Chynah Tyler focuses on issues of affordable housing, economic development, education, and public safety. She has sponsored bills aimed at juvenile justice reform, established a permanent commission on the social status of black men and boys, and worked to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses and to create a statewide office targeted at youth development. She has secured funding for numerous programs, such as the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program. In 2018, she received the YMCA Legislative Champion Award and was also honored by “Building Pathways” for her efforts to secure funding for the union building trades pre-apprenticeship program.

In Her Own Words

“The sky is the limit.”

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Vice-Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health

Member, Joint Committees on Education; Housing; Public Health; Public Safety and Homeland Security; Ways and Means

Legislative Aide, Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Volunteer, Probation Department, Roxbury Division of the Boston Municipal Court*

Educational Background

BS, Northeastern University

ERIKA UYTERHOEVEN

House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature 27th Middlesex

2021-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Japanese American



Public Service Highlights

An economist, organizer, and activist who co-founded Act on Mass, the lead organization advocating for transparency and progressive causes in the Massachusetts Legislature. Erika Uyterhoeven was elected in November 2020 to the Massachusetts House to represent several neighborhoods of Somerville.

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

National Out-of-State Organizing Director, Bernie 2016*

Head of Digital and Data for Momentum (UK)*

Advisor, Nika Elugardo for State Representative Campaign*

Co-founder, Act on Mass*

Educational Background

MBA, Harvard University

MPP, Toulouse School of Economics

BA, Wellesley College

Current Position

State Representative for the 27th Middlesex District

In Her Own Words

"Growing up the daughter of an immigrant single mother taught me the importance of compassion, hard work, and dedication to my goals. I aim to bring those life lessons with me in service of my community in the state legislature."

JOSSIE M. VALENTIN

City Council, City of Holyoke Ward 4

2014-2019

Racial/Ethnic Background: Puerto Rican



Public Service Highlights

Former Holyoke City Councilor Jossie Valentin served three terms during which time she provided a strong voice for her constituents and worked 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. Jossie Valentin continues to work on quality-of-life issues as well as social justice issues in the City of Holyoke. She did not seek re-election in 2019 and works for U.S. Senator Ed Markey.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Board of Directors, Wistariahurst Museum

Member, Public Service Committee, Holyoke City Council

Member, Public Safety Committee, Holyoke City Council

Founding Member, Holyoke GLBTQ Task Force, Advisory Board, Roca Inc., Springfield

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Director, Psychiatric Evaluation and Stabilization Unit, Hampden County Correctional Center*

Director, Arbor House Transitional Support Services*

Director, Casa Latina*

Bilingual Senior Academic Counselor, Holyoke Community College*

Educational Background

MA, American International College

BA, University of Puerto Rico

Current Position

State Policy Advisor, Office of Senator J. Edward Markey

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

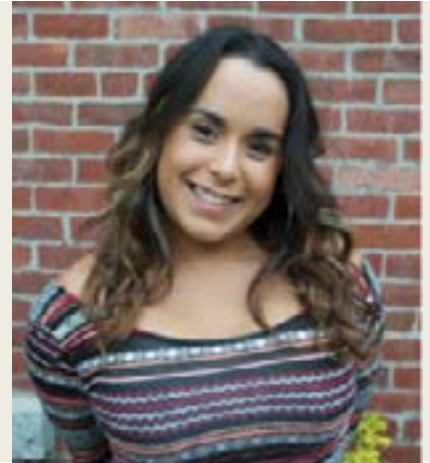
"Growing up in Puerto Rico, I volunteered for many political campaigns, but I never thought that I would run for office. When I decided to run in 2013, I realized the importance of electing women –particularly women of color –into office. We need to have more women representing our communities, especially 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

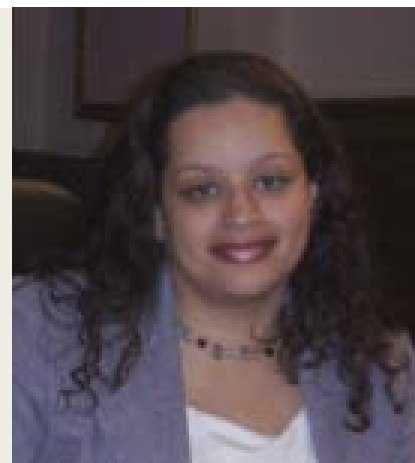
Health Promoter/Organizer, The Unite Here Health Fund

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.”

JEANETTE VELEZ

School Committee, City of Chelsea

2011-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

Jeanette Velez decided to run because at the time she had two young children in the Public Schools and also worked as a Family Advocate for the local Head Start program where she helped families in the process of obtaining evaluations for children with suspected special needs. She was also part of the local sports boards such as little league, pop warner and youth basketball which kept her in contact with the local families and there she also saw the need to represent these families who often felt they had no voice due to their immigration status. Jeanette has had the honor of serving as Chair of the School Committee in 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019. On January 20, 2020 Jeanette received the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Chelsea Spirit Award. Jeanette has worked in the field of Early Childhood Education for 20 years. She currently is the Program Coordinator for the Coordinated Family & Community Engagement grant awarded by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care to serve Chelsea and Revere.

In Her Own Words

“Be the voice for the voiceless and let them know they matter.”

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chelsea Pop Warner

Chelsea Little League

Chelsea Youth Basketball

Community Ambassador, Raising A Reader MA board

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

School Site Council, Kelly Elementary School

Educational Background

AS, Bay State College

AS, North Shore Community College

Current Position

Program Coordinator for The Chelsea / Revere Family Network

DAMALI VIDOT

City Council, City of Chelsea At-Large

2016-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



Public Service Highlights

A lifelong resident of Chelsea who was raised in a union household, Councilor Vidot grew up organizing with Chelsea's most vulnerable youth. With a steadfast commitment to government transparency, authentic leadership, and programs for youth, she was first elected to the Chelsea City Council 2015 and made history by becoming the first woman to lead the City as Council President for two consecutive terms following her role as Vice President in her first term. Her tenure has been marked by her leadership on issues related to transportation, housing, and fairness on behalf of all of Chelsea's residents. As Council President, Vidot worked with the MBTA to address critical transit concerns and secured millions of dollars in transportation stabilization funds. Alongside her work on public transportation, she has promoted regional housing affordability solutions.

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

- Co-Founder, Chelsea Anti-Displacement Roundtable
- Co-Founder and President, *The Movement* basketball league
- Youth Worker, ROCA
- Member, Policy Counsel Board for CAPIC Headstart
- Member, Youth Street Outreach Worker
- Career Counselor, Career Source

Current Position

- Owner, Tout Le Monde Apparel, LLC

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"By staying true to my core and not forcing myself into a predetermined box, I create space for other people, especially young women, to feel included in a system that has for too long disenfranchised them. If we build community from a place where all vulnerable populations are heard and empowered, we will truly have a government that is reflective of the people it serves."

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

1993-2008

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 women, 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. She was one of three Massachusetts elected officials responsible for securing the Democratic National Convention for Boston in 2004. She stepped into the national spotlight in 2002 with her moving speech to support gay marriage in Massachusetts. 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 in 1991, where she practiced until elected.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Senate Chair, Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight*

Co-Chair, Public Construction Reform Commission*

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

Trustee, Roxbury Trust Fund

Advisory Board Member, Asian American Civic Association

Treasurer, National Transformative Justice Coalition

Member, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative*

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

Educational Background

JD, Boston College

MOL, Colorado Christian University

BS, American International College

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“There’s no right or wrong way to get there. Respect and recognize the value of your life and your experience not after 20 years of working and getting ready for public service. Women spend their whole life getting ready. Men think they’re born ready! We are ready when we say we’re ready. Go for it!”

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.”

AYESHA M. WILSON

School Committee, City of Cambridge

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Jamaican American



Public Service Highlights

As a first-generation Jamaican American and product of Cambridge Public Housing and Cambridge Public Schools, Ayesha is proud to serve the city that raised her. A social worker with a passion for teaching, guiding, and elevating young adults to reach their fullest potential, Ayesha sees and understands the importance of the "Whole Child" and the importance of social-emotional and mental health learning and care. Since taking office, Ayesha has and will continue to center the voices of scholars, educators, and families of color. Her priorities include equity and access, transparency, individualized success plans, mental health, and social emotional learning.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Special Education and Student Supports Sub-committee

Member, School Climate Sub-committee

Member, Governance Sub-committee

Member, Cambridge Family Policy Council

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Member, Greater Boston Association of Black Social Workers

Board Member, YWCA Cambridge

Secretary, Cambridge-Branch of NAACP

Alum, Emerge Massachusetts

Alum, New Politics Leadership Academy

Educational Background

MSW, Wheelock College

BSW, Wheelock College

AA, Urban College of Boston

Current Position

Senior Teacher-Counselor, The Work Force Youth Program, Cambridge Housing Authority;
Live-in Resident, Specialized Housing

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"My campaign slogan is "Together We Are Better."
It is important to work in partnership, and to build community within your community. Many people may not "see" you, and that's okay. The goal is for them to connect with your vision as one that enhances said community."

KYRA WILSON COOK

School Committee, Town of Acton Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee

2019-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



Public Service Highlights

A resident of Acton since 2013, School Committee Member Kyra Cook is a former teacher who taught middle school history in Hyde Park and Roxbury before moving to MetroWest. An active parishioner of St. Anne's-in-the-Fields in Lincoln, she serves as a Lay Eucharistic Minister, and recently co-chaired the search for a new rector, worked on the successful multi-million dollar capital campaign, and served on the stewardship committee. An aspiring novelist, she has taught short story and noveling classes through Acton-Boxborough's Community Education and Concord Academy Summer Camp since 2018.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Member, Action-Boxboro Regional School District Superintendent Search Screening Committee

Member, Superintendent's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Group

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Founder, MetroWest Writers Guild

Classroom Mom, McCarthy-Towne

Municipal Liaison, National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo)

Educational Background

BA, University of Maryland

EdM, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Current Position

Events Coordinator, Silver Unicorn Bookstore; Search Consultant, Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

“You’re needed more than you know. If you’re asked to serve, say yes. Go for it. You can do it.”

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 Wisnewski 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

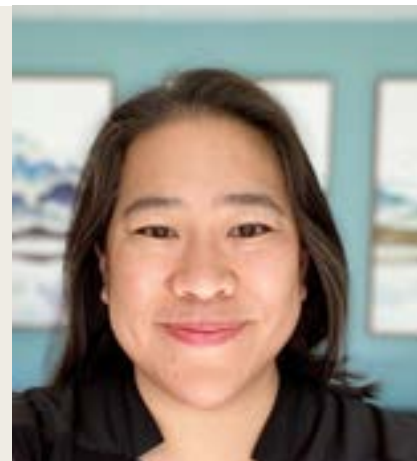
"I am passionate about advocating for and promoting legislation that supports families and children."

LISA WONG

Mayor, City of Fitchburg

2007-2015

Racial/Ethnic Background: Asian American, Chinese descent



Public Service Highlights

Lisa Wong currently serves as the Town Manager of Winchester. Wong first ran for office in 2007 when 27 years old. She is the first minority and Asian American to be elected in Fitchburg and the youngest female Mayor elected in Massachusetts. She served four terms in office and was recognized for her work in education, public health, conservation, economic development, and finance. After leaving office in 2016, Wong served as a Senior Fellow at Governing and on the School of Professional Studies faculty at Clark University. She previously served as Executive Director of the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority, Executive Director of the Women's Institute for Housing & Economic Development, & Deputy Director of the Asian American Civic Association.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Board Member, Chinese Historical Society of New England; Great Neighborhoods; MassINC, ACLU of Massachusetts; Overseers at Boston University

Chair, Fitchburg School Committee*

Advisory Board, U.S. EPA Local Government Advisory Board*

Director, Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority; Co-Chair, Massachusetts Gateway Cities Initiative; Advisory Board, Mayors Innovation Project*

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Chair, Ivy Child International

Board Member, Commonwealth Corporation

State Director, Young Elected Officials Network*

Fellow, Women's Pipeline for Change*

Director, Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development*

Research Mentor, Global Economics, University of Wyoming*

Founder and Coach, Special Olympics Swim Team

Educational Background

MA, Boston University

BA (dual), Boston University

Current Position

Town Manager, Town of Winchester

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

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

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 and the first woman of color to serve as Boston City Council President. Michelle has been a national voice for bold, progressive action at the local level, authoring successful legislation for paid parental leave, healthcare equity prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity, procurement reform creating equity in opportunity for minority- and women-owned businesses, language access, and healthy food purchasing. As a cyclist and transit advocate, she fights for transportation access as fundamental to economic mobility, racial equity, and climate justice.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Planning, Development & Transportation; Post Audit and Oversight

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, 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.”

EUNICE ZEIGLER

City Council, City of Methuen

2018-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Haitian American



Public Service Highlights

A community leader passionate about community engagement, empowering women and youth, and issues pertinent to community development, Councilwoman Zeigler was elected to serve as an East District City Councilor for the City of Methuen. Focused on fiscal responsibility, education, community health, economic development, she leverages her experience in municipal finance and budget review to help keep Methuen on track. Within her first 60 days in office she earned an appointment to the Finance Committee and established an Economic Development Committee for which she is serving as chair. Councilor Zeigler credits her perseverance and tenacity to her Haitian roots and encourages other leaders to take a seat at the table and inspire change.

Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service

Chair, Economic Development Committee

Member, American Society of Public Administrators

Sergeant at Arms, National Haitian American Elected Officials Network

Member, National Association of Haitian Professionals

Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities

Treasurer, Northern MA YWCA

Educational Background

BSC, UMass Lowell

MS, UMass Lowell

Current Position

Grant Writer/Compliance Specialist, Lowell Housing Authority

Advice for Aspiring Women of Color Public Leaders

"Your path to realizing your greatness will be like no other path. Do not be afraid of it rather embrace your truth and do not let anyone put limitations on your abilities. You are the embodiment of perseverance, strength, your fire is unmatched, and your community cannot move forward without your voice at the table."

While the research team attempted to reach all of the women included in this publication and to present the most comprehensive and up-to-date profile for each and every woman, the following profiles are offered in an abbreviated format given the limited information available.

SANDY ALMONTE

**City Council, Lawrence
District A**

2010-2016

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

YUKI COHEN

City Council, City of Pittsfield

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Korean 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*



HSU BALZER EILEEN

School Committee, Town of Watertown

2003-2020

Racial/Ethnic Background: Chinese



MARY H. GOODE*

**House of Representatives, Massachusetts Legislature
10th Suffolk**

1975-1978

Racial/Ethnic Background: African American



SON HUI MAY

School Committee, Town of Erving

2008-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

RAFAELA PICHARDO

**School Committee, City of Lawrence
District C**

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Dominican

GILDA RAMIREZ*

**School Committee, City of Chelsea
District 3**

2004-2005

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



ESTELA REYES

**City Council, Lawrence
District B**

2012-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Latina



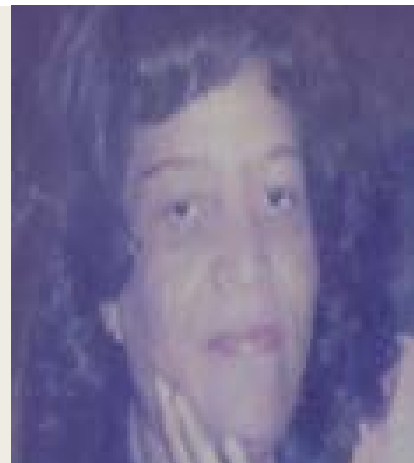
GRACE D. ROMERO*

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

LINDA HELEN WOODLAND

School Committee, Wachusett Regional School District

2020-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Asian Indian/German



BEVERLY WRIGHT

Board of Selectmen, Town of Aquinnah

2011-Present

Racial/Ethnic Background: Native American



Methods

Background: What Led to Our First-Ever Publication in 2015

This publication was initially 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 their contributions to the Commonwealth and in communities across the state. The then-Program Manager of the Women's Pipeline for Change, Ileana Cintrón, developed an initial dataset with research assistance from interns and others from *¿Oíste?*, the first Latino Civic Education organization in the state. In addition to contacting individuals familiar with the electoral history of the Commonwealth's 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* authored by Carol Hardy-Fanta and Jeffrey Gerson and published in 2002. This foundational dataset was essential for the development of the first edition of this publication, *Profiles in Leadership: Women of Color Elected to Office in Massachusetts*, issued in 2015.

The initial dataset provided to the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy by the Women's Pipeline for Change in 2014 contained the names of 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 individuals listed. Elected offices covered in the dataset included town council, city council, mayor, board of aldermen, board of selectmen/select board, school committee, State Senate, Massachusetts House of Representatives, and Sheriff.

Building on the dataset provided by the Women's Pipeline for Change, researchers from the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy conducted extensive data collection to identify all the women of color elected to office in Massachusetts, including women who may have not been included in the original compilation. Center researchers improved upon the initial dataset by filling in data gaps with a particular focus on biographical information primarily through Internet sources. They also expanded the dataset to include women of color elected to office between 2013 and 2015. Since there is no requirement for the collection of data regarding sex, gender identity, or the racial/ethnic background of elected officials in Massachusetts, in order to produce the 2015 publication, information had to be collected through other sources of information, including: biographies available on the Internet; credible news organizations; and campaign websites. Researchers also used the Massachusetts Municipal Association Directory, town and city government websites, Massachusetts State Elections Division, and outreach to the Massachusetts Association of School Committees to collect identity information that would help discern whether or not an individual identified as a woman of color.

Given limited data research resources, the research team decided to focus primarily on cities and towns with large minority populations and communities of color to most effectively and efficiently compile a list of officials for outreach to ascertain electeds' gender identity and racial/ethnic background. Additionally, an online survey was administered to all women in the dataset, including the women in the initial dataset and those who were added. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subsample of women in order to collect more in-depth information about the journeys and experiences of women of color electeds. The research protocol received approval from UMass Boston's Institutional Review Board.

The survey for the 2015 profiles included the following 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. There was an overall response rate of approximately 25% and this represents either full or partial completion. Due to missing and/or inaccurate contact information for women included in the dataset, it was difficult to achieve a higher response rate even with very extensive outreach, including several email messages and follow-up phone calls.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted by a racially and ethnically diverse team of researchers with 22 women of color electeds 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 interview data collected were coded and discussed in the 2015 edition's Introduction co-authored by Ann Bookman and Christa Kelleher. The list of women interviewed may be found on p. 182.

Data Collection and Analysis: Building the 2021 Publication

Data collected through the center's collaborative project with the UMass Boston ethnic institutes, The Massachusetts Representation Project: Diverse Leadership for A Diverse Commonwealth, supported the update of this publication. Starting in 2019, the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, along with the ethnic institutes, launched an initiative to create a data dashboard to document racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in electoral leadership in Massachusetts. In collaboration with the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black Culture, Institute for Asian American Studies, and Institute for New England Native American Studies, the center is conducting an online survey of more than three thousand elected officials in the Commonwealth. Survey administration is ongoing, and offices include select board, town council, mayor, school committee, state representative, state senator, district attorney, sheriff, governor's council, statewide constitutional officers, and members of Congress. Given that the Boston School Committee is appointed, not elected, it is not included in offices covered by the survey.

Initial announcements of the survey were posted by the Massachusetts Municipal Association and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees inviting elected officials to complete the survey. Several email requests have been sent directly to elected officials requesting their completion and follow-up calls made to nonrespondents. The survey requests self-identified race, ethnicity, gender identity, office, and jurisdiction or municipality, as applicable. Individuals who identify as female and as having a race and/or ethnicity other than white were included in the women of color dataset for the production of this 2021 publication.

In addition to the online survey, the Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition and Amplify Latinx offered lists of women of color and Latina elected officials respectively, and these women were added to the dataset for the 2021 publication. While all female elected officials were contacted by a member of the research team about inclusion in the guide, some declined being included, citing that they didn't identify as women of color and/or simply didn't want to be listed in the publication. These women were not included in the publication.

Profiles were drafted by researchers and sent to all women for whom researchers had contact information. They were subsequently sent to each woman for feedback, necessary edits, and final approval. Unfortunately, not every profile was updated for the 2021 edition of the publication as some women who left office after 2015 were not reachable for revisions to be made. For those women of color included in the 2015 publication who were not in office at the time of the 2015 publication, there was also an effort to reach them for updates on their current positions and roles.

The anchor date for the data reflected in this publication is 15 March 2021. Therefore, profiles contained in this publication are current until this date. However, it is likely that there remain women of color missing from this publication for several reasons, including a low response rate to the survey and/or women being contacted but not responsive to requests for information. Consequently, even with extensive effort put into the development of this revised publication, it is likely that not each and every woman of color who has been or is currently in office has been included here.

The Profiles: What's Included and Why

While every effort was made to obtain accurate and updated information about each officeholder—both current and former—some information was unavailable and therefore there are some blank sections in profiles presented in the publication. Given the lack of standardized information available and received from respondents, the information contained in the sections “Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service,” and “Community, Nonprofit, Political, and Advocacy Activities” do not reference years, but do indicate former roles whenever possible. Additionally, most committee positions listed under “Boards, Committees, and Additional Public Service” relate to the current elected position, unless otherwise noted. Furthermore, according to available information, several of the women listed in the guide are deceased and their names are marked with an asterisk (*).

While there is a wealth of information contained in this publication, there are limitations to what is available particularly due to minimal content available on elected officials through municipal websites and limited contact information provided through such websites. Information related to candidacies and election losses, for instance, was generally not included due in large part to challenges with accessing such information in a user-friendly and standardized manner.

Even though every effort was made to offer the complete profiles for all women included in both the initial publication and this updated version, missing information has resulted in minimal profiles for some women of color who have served in an elected capacity across the Commonwealth. Their election, service, and contributions should not go unnoticed. Therefore, these profiles are included in a separate section and noted as such given that theirs are abbreviated profiles.

With its valued internal and external partners, the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy remains committed to continuing to refine and expand this vital research on the political leadership of women of color in Massachusetts.

Women of Color: An Intersectional and Expansive Approach

The term “women of color” is intended to be as an inclusive and broad term in this publication. While it is a common and frequently used term utilized 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, and/or immigrant background. We use “women of color” throughout this publication and as a central identity construct of this project and we recognize 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 key elected policymaking bodies and executive-level public offices across the Commonwealth. We argue that these are women with racially, ethnically, culturally, and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, including those who themselves are immigrants to the United States, as well as those who are second-generation Americans. 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 non-white, non-Latinx backgrounds. One of the criticisms is that the term groups all nonwhite women together, making it seem as though it is homogenous group erasing the experiences of particular groups, such as Black women. We recognize that all women, particularly nonwhite women, have their own unique experiences shaped by culture, language, race, ethnicity, religion, and other aspects of identity and tradition. Given the very limited nature of current approaches to representing racial/ethnic heritages and/or identities, such as the U.S. Census, we have prioritized self-identification of racial/ethnic background. We took steps in the development of the 2015 publication and, since then, as indicated previously, have launched a new major electoral data project described above to ensure that the determination of racial/ethnic identity was made by the women in elected positions themselves and reported as fully and accurately as possible in this updated publication.

Women of Color Interviewed for the 2015 Publication

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

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- Personal Communication with John "Jim" Peters, Jr, Executive Director, Commission on Indian Affairs, Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 10 May 2021.
- Personal Communication with Cedric Woods, Director, Institute for New England Native American Studies, UMass Boston. 14 April 2021.
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