



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Adriano Espaillat

Estela Vazquez

ADRIANO ESPAILLAT May 13, 2013



Women of
DISTINCTION
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

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Award: HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Year: 2013

Estela Vazquez is Executive Vice President of 1199 SEIU, the largest healthcare union in the country and the largest union local in the country. Ms. Vazquez diligently represents the 15,000 hospital workers at Montefiore, Beth Israel and St. Luke's-Roosevelt Medical Centers, among other institutions.

A native of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Ms. Vazquez became politically active in 1961 as a junior high school student, joining demonstrations to demand the removal from government of the family and supporters of the brutal dictator Rafael Trujillo, who had been in power for 31 years.

In 1963, after Juan Bosch was elected in the first democratic elections in generations, the United States government supported a coup d'état that successfully overthrew the new government. The new military dictatorship violently crushed human rights. This led to a popular uprising in April 1965, in which Ms. Vazquez was an active participant. She was arrested in May 1965 and imprisoned until her mother was able to attain her release in August.

After her release from jail, Ms. Vazquez immediately flew to New York City, which she has called home ever since. In the late 1960s, she became active in the movement against the Vietnam War, and with African-American and Latino community movements like the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords.

Through her life, Ms. Vazquez made it her mission to fight for social and economic justice. In the 1970s, she joined the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and was a founding member in 1984 of Latinos for Jesse Jackson.

Ms. Vazquez is the proud mother of three children – Evelyn, Alejandro and Tamara and the very proud abuela of four grandchildren – Daniela, Marino, Saul and Adrian.