



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR  
James Sanders Jr.

## Inspiration and Education Were Focus of Senator Sanders' Successful Women's Leadership Luncheon in Recognition of Women's History Month

JAMES SANDERS JR. March 26, 2019



In recognition of Women's History Month, Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village, Far Rockaway) hosted a Women's leadership Luncheon at the Summerset at Locust Manor in Jamaica, on March 24, 2019, where attendees were able to receive guidance and direction on how to maximize their potential and perhaps seek positions of community or political service. Female elected officials and community leaders were on hand to impart their wisdom and advice. This was a wonderful opportunity for women seeking advancement in

both career and life.

“We are trying to train leaders and get them to the next level,” Sanders said. “One thing is certain; we desperately need women in government.”

“The history of women is something we need to applaud,” Sanders continued. “It is something, of which, a real man is not afraid. A real man needs a strong woman. We want to pray for all women, for their strength, for their minds; we want them to understand that their time is now.”

At the event, Senator Sanders honored four women in leadership, whose work exemplifies community service. They were First Lady Martha Harley-Lewis of Zion Gospel Church, Dr. Deborah Hoyle, Director of Ocean Bay Community Cornerstone (The Child Center of New York), Merlene Smith-Sotillo, President & CEO of Sickle Cell Awareness Foundation Corp Int'l, and April Jones, Founder & Executive Director of House-A-Soldier, Inc.

Dr. Coralanne Griffith-Hunte, Founder and Chairwoman of Created for Greatness Leadership Group gave an excellent and inspiring training at the luncheon, where she discussed topics like: how to identify a leader, the capacity to influence, how to effect change in the community, learning from the destiny of others, clearing the way for your plan, and achieving your goals.

“There is greatness in this room because every one of you is great at whatever you do,” Griffith-Hunte said. “You are the best you to walk the earth, and if you weren’t here, I would miss you even though I don’t know you.”

Griffith-Hunte noted that effective leaders surround themselves with the right people and

build on each person's strengths, that leadership is not based on the title you hold, but your ability to influence and inspire, and that an important part of effecting change in one's community is through volunteerism.

First Lady Martha Harley-Lewis of Zion Gospel Church shared her view on leadership stating that a good leader "goes the way, knows the way and shows the way." She added that leaders share and connect with their team and "throw down the rope to help others up."

Guest speaker, Assembly Member Catalina Cruz, who represents one of the most diverse districts in the nation, covering the neighborhoods of Corona, Elmhurst and Jackson Heights spoke about the importance of representing her varied constituency. It was a message that was written all over her face, literally. She was covered in powder from a Holi celebration she had attended just prior to Senator Sanders' Luncheon.

"People understand that when you are an elected, you show up for your people, and you make sure they know that you are one of them and that you care," Cruz said.

"The backbone of, not just the family, but of our communities, are women, and it is the women that make sure that many events like this one are put together, that we bring the children out to the cultural events, that we are going to church every Sunday," Cruz added. "It's the women that get it done."

Keynote speaker, Senator Julia Salazar, Chair of the Women's Committee on Health, spoke about why she chose to run for elected office and what it represents for other women, in relation to empowering them to become leaders.

"One thing that really compelled me to run is this idea that our community couldn't wait

another two years to have new leadership, especially with the rent laws expiring this year in June, and our community having seen an enormous amount of displacement, increasing homelessness, and people not being able to live in communities where they have lived for generations," Salazar said. "I was still hesitant to run even after being asked a few times, but I knew time was precious, and I knew that I had a movement behind me."