



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Julia Salazar

## Senator Julia Salazar Honors Four Women During National Women's Month for the Women of Distinction Award

SENATOR JULIA SALAZAR March 25, 2020

| ISSUE: **2020 WOMEN OF DISTINCTION, HONORING WOMEN, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT, WOMEN'S ISSUES COMMITTEE**

| COMMITTEE: **WOMEN'S ISSUES**



New York State Senator and Chair of the Women's Issues Committee, Senator Julia Salazar, Honors four women during National Women's Month for the 2020 Women's Distinction Award.

**HONORING ZULMILENA THEN: COMMUNITY LEADER AND ADVOCATE**

Zulmilena Then is a native Brooklynite who grew up in East New York. She received her Bachelor of Architecture from Pratt Institute and joined Weeksville Heritage Center as their Preservation Manager of the Historic Hunterfly Road Houses in 2020. In 2015, her love for historic buildings and community inspired her to form, Preserving East New York (PENY), an organization focused on celebrating and elevating the voices of people of color to make a real social and political change to protect their communities through preservation. Through PENY's educational programming and outreach, Zulmilena aims to demonstrate the potential of preservation as a tool that can benefit the East New York neighborhood socially, economically and culturally and through this effort awaken the community's interest, support, and involvement in the process of preserving the neighborhood's historic resources.

#### **HONORING MARTHA BAYONA: COMMUNITY LEADER AND ADVOCATE**

Martha Bayona was born in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and was raised in Santa Cruz-Bolivia, a tropical city at the heart of the country. She came to New York in 1989 and has been a resident of Bushwick since 1990. She spent 13 years volunteering with Jamaica's Church of God previously serving as the Director of the Sunday School, Director of Summer School, and Director of the Children's Mission Program with the help of her husband and daughter while also running a food pantry. In March 2016, she joined the Community Education Council (CEC) for District 32. As the council's president since 2017, she has been working with District 32 parents, the Bushwick community, elected officials, the NYC Department of Education and other elected parent leaders through the city, advocating for public schools in Bushwick to be the best they can be and ensure all children can succeed.

#### **HONORING FRANCES LUCERNA: COMMUNITY LEADER AND ADVOCATE**

Frances Lucerna has been a pioneer of community driven arts and education for more than three decades. She pursued her artistic passion as a professional dancer for 10 years and in 1980 returned to her community in Williamsburg, Brooklyn and founded the Williamsburg

Arts & Culture Council for Youth, the first performing and visual arts program for Latino and African American adolescents in Williamsburg. In 1982, Ms. Lucerna became co-founder of El Puento, a nationally recognized community/youth development organization dedicated to holistic leadership for peace and social justice. During her decade as Artistic Director, Ms. Lucerna created Brooklyn's most comprehensive Latino Arts and Cultural Center, providing pre-professional training in the performing, visual and media arts. In 1998, Ms Lucerna received the prestigious Heinz Award for the Human Condition, with El Puento's Founder and President Luis Garden Acosta. In May 2018, Ms Lucerna was recognized for her contributions with an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from her alma mater Bank Street College.

#### **HONORING DIGNA XIOMARA LAYNE: COMMUNITY LEADER AND ADVOCATE**

Digna Xiomara Layne, Community Relations Manager, joined Good Shepherd Services in 2014, and has over 25 years of nonprofit work experience. In her role, Digna designs, implements, and oversees effective community development and outreach initiatives in Brooklyn with a focus on the neighborhoods of East New York, Brownsville, Bedford Stuyvesant, and Crown Heights, working to address issues by developing and maintaining relationships with a wide range of community members and by identifying specific resources that directly target the needs of residents.