



IMMIGRANT WOMEN LEADERS FELLOWSHIP ★ 2015



Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Mission

Building on its Charter mandate, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) promotes the well-being of immigrant communities by recommending policies and programs that facilitate successful integration of immigrant New Yorkers into the civic, economic, and cultural life of the City.

Unbound Philanthropy is a proud supporter of the Fellowship.

Message from the Commissioner



It is my pleasure to introduce you to the 2015 Immigrant Women Leaders Fellows. These 15 women are talented social change agents with an established record of achievement in non-profit, grassroots, academic and faith-based organizations in New York City. They are committed to advancing the status of immigrant women and girls.

These Fellows are a diverse group of individual women who work across many disciplines from domestic violence prevention to the arts. They represent many cultural and ethnic backgrounds, speak many languages, and have fascinating stories of immigration and integration.

We, at MOIA, have as much to learn from this talented group of female immigrant leaders and, of course, look forward to facilitating their learning and development during the next few months.

This Fellowship complements MOIA's other strategies for improving the quality of life of New York's immigrants. It represents an important investment in the human services field, in the future of immigrant communities, and in the future of women and girls in New York City.

Nisha Agarwal
Commissioner
New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

The Fellowship

In honor of the anniversary of the 1995 U.N. Conference on Women and the resulting Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) launched a fellowship program for immigrant women leaders.

Over the course of four months, Fellows accelerate their personal and professional development by exploring real-time leadership challenges. This program will help the Fellows recognize and effectively eliminate the effects of systemic oppression on the leaders themselves, their organizations, and communities by:

- Learning to listen as a powerful tool for effective management;
- Telling stories connected to racism, sexism, classism, colonialism and migration;
- Examining internalized oppression as hurdles to leadership;
- Re-evaluating and re-framing personal and management/ leadership experiences;
- Acting decisively against internalized oppressive programming;
- Leading and effectively supporting other leaders;
- Using data and results-based accountability to bring about measurable and sustainable change.

MOIA Vision of Leadership

- Leadership is the ability to think well about people and to take responsibility for things going well for other people. Leadership is a universal human characteristic, but not everyone has had the chance to develop their own leadership skills and not everyone's leadership is acknowledged. Leadership is not a job or a title, but every job at every level of every organization brings opportunities for people to develop and apply their leadership.
- Effective leaders are aware of their own identities. Self-exploration is central to our growth as leaders, our relationships with others, and our ability to promote equity. Our various social identities--sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic class, religion, and language, among others--are important aspects of our selves that shape our attitudes and beliefs in relation to leadership.
- In thinking well about groups of people, leaders bring attention to, and act on, disparities and divisions based on sex, race, class and other identities that undermine the well-being and success of individuals and the group as a whole.
- Effective social change leaders are also oriented towards results. They can develop clear targets of what they are trying to accomplish and can use data to measure progress and change course as needed.
- Leaders collaborate with others, understanding that the capacity to build consensus and make group decisions enables leaders to align their actions and move forward to achieve results.



**RITA
ABADI**

RITA ABADI is the Operations Manager and Clinician at the Mount Sinai Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention (SAVI) Program. She is a New York State licensed Mental Health Counselor and is licensed in Clinical Psychology in Brazil, with experience in trauma, crisis intervention, immigration and women's rights.

Ms. Abadi received her Master's Degree in Mental Health Counseling from New York University in 1998. She brings over 25 years of psychotherapy experience to her practice working with survivors of sexual and domestic violence. In 2004, she designed and implemented the Sex Trafficking Program for SAVI and she continues to actively contribute to the program.

Ms. Abadi participated in the professional group that pioneered child abuse services in Brazil and was awarded a one-year training fellowship in Child Abuse Treatment by the Sao Paulo State Government. She also completed a 4-year post-graduate training in Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama, as well as trainings on trauma treatment.

She is skilled at working in multidisciplinary teams and in creating and delivering trainings and workshops to professionals, students and the community. In collaboration with Mount Sinai's Global Health Department, she has developed and delivered trainings in Colombia. She is fluent in 4 languages and has a multicultural upbringing.



**HAJIA
RAMATU AHMED**

HAJIA RAMATU AHMED is a highly motivated community leader with a clear vision for Africa and the African community in New York. She advocates for improved social and health services, on immigration, housing, and education issues, and refers community members for services. Her rich cross-cultural approach has enabled her to constructively work with diverse communities in New York City. As a trusted leader, she is highly regarded within the community. She holds a diploma from the Pan African Institute for Development in Cameroon and a certificate program in Entrepreneurship from Ahmedabad, India.

Her years of experience in community development prompted her to create the African Life Center in the Bronx serving the African community.

She is alumni of CORO- New York Leadership Center, a member of Community Board 4, and currently the chair of the African Leadership Council for Bronx Councilwoman Vanessa Gibson. Ramatu is the Deputy Secretary of the Council of African Imams Inc. She played a key role in the establishment of the Medina clinic within Harlem hospital for the underserved Muslim/African community.



**AFREEN
ALAM**

AFREEN ALAM is the Executive Director of Chhaya CDC located in Jackson Heights, Queens. Chhaya works with New Yorkers of South Asian origin to advocate for and build economically stable, sustainable, and thriving communities. Previously she served as the Deputy Director at Chhaya, playing a pivotal role in its regeneration and working tirelessly to build a strong foundation on which the organization is currently thriving. Ms. Alam also served as the Director of Housing & Community Development at the Nation Urban League, the nation's oldest civil rights organization, where she was responsible for overseeing housing and economic development programs at 40 local affiliates and provided leadership on national housing policy advocacy. She also worked at UNAIDS and Harvard University advancing human rights in international community development.

A daughter of Bangladeshi immigrants, Ms. Alam has been deeply committed to grassroots organizing in the immigrant communities of NYC and has been involved with Worker's Awaaz, South Asians Against Police Brutality & Racism, Turning Point for Women and Families, and Muslim Reform Movement, to name a few. She received her Master's degree in Economic and Political Development from Columbia University.

Ms. Alam is passionate about travel, respectful parenting (RIE), elder care/care giving, and all things COOP.



NAHEED SAMADI BAHRAM

NAHEED SAMADI BAHRAM is the New York Program Director for Women for Afghan Women, where she has been working since 2007. She began as a volunteer and now runs the New York office.

Ms. Samadi Bahram was born into a working-class, conservative family in Kabul, Afghanistan. Her family migrated to Peshawar, Pakistan after the loss of her mother in a bomb explosion. Ms. Samadi Bahram graduated from high school in Pakistan and taught ESL to Afghan women in the Afghan refugee camps in Peshawar. She then moved to the United States in 2006 as an international student and graduated from Queens College in June 2011 with a BA in Finance and Economics.

She serves on the board of Flushing Interfaith Council as well as in the Organizing Committee of the Queens Borough President's Iftar event since 2010. Ms. Samadi Bahram will be starting her master's degree at Columbia University this fall.

Women for Afghan Women is a grassroots, human rights organization. They are dedicated to securing and protecting the rights of disenfranchised Afghan women and girls in Afghanistan and New York, particularly their rights to develop their individual potential, to self-determination, and to be represented in all areas of life: political, social, cultural and economic.



**CYNTHIA
CARRION**

CYNTHIA CARRION is the Deputy Director at the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights, committed to expanding access to legal immigration services, participating in policy making and community organizing. For over a decade, her career has focused on advancing human rights and community empowerment on a local, national and international level. Since 2000, she has been involved in community and youth development as an administrator, educator, advocate, filmmaker, and organizer in collaboration with youth and community based organizations in New York, San Jose (Costa Rica), Freetown (Sierra Leone) and along the Haitian-Dominican border.

Prior to joining the team at NMCIR, Ms. Carrion worked with international NGOs to support youth development and leadership as the National Youth Programs Coordinator for Amnesty International USA and the Youth Producing Change Coordinator for Human Rights Watch. In addition, she was the Partnerships and Programs Manager for The Urban Assembly. Ms. Carrion also served as the Director of Youth Channel, the youth serving division of Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN). Before coming to MNN, she was the Program Coordinator for the Caribbean Cultural Center-African Diaspora Institute and was formerly the Pre-teen Coordinator for Hour Children, an advocacy organization for children of incarcerated mothers.



**KAJORI
CHAUDHURI**

KAJORI CHAUDHURI is the Director of Programs and Operations at Sapna NYC, based in the Bronx. Ms. Chaudhuri has always been passionate about women's and immigrants' rights and has sought to integrate them in her career. She started working as an advocate against domestic violence with Sakhi, a pioneer organization in the South Asian women's movement in the US, where she received an award for social work services from the Queens' Borough President's Office. Since joining Sapna NYC in 2011, Ms. Chaudhuri has worked with senior colleagues to lead, manage and nurture Sapna leading it to its current stability promoting the health, social, and economic empowerment of New York City's South Asian communities.

Born and raised in India, Kajori considers NYC, where she has been living for the past decade with her husband and raising twin beautiful children, her adopted home. She believes in the immense opportunities the City has to offer and sees herself to be a part of the solution for the challenges it presents. Ms. Chaudhuri earned a Master's Degree in Social Work from the Hunter College School of Social Work.



**DAYANNE
DANIER**

DAYANNE DANIER is a successful fashion designer with a passion for giving back to the community which stems from her family roots in Haiti. After the devastating earthquake in January 2010, Ms. Danier organized a back-to-school drive where she collected art and school supplies that she personally brought to Haiti to distribute. In 2011, Ms. Danier returned to Haiti where she worked with an organization on a seminar to teach pattern drafting and construction techniques to a group of sewing instructors.

Ms. Danier co-founded Fleur De Vie (Flower of Life), a nonprofit organization based in New York that works with local organizations to implement social change in their communities through education, health, and environmental sustainability. In its initial year, the organization worked with one school and 120 students. Over the years, Fleur De Vie has grown to partner with five schools and over 600 students and has increased its program to include Back to School, Reading Is Fundamental, and more.



KARINA AYBAR-JACOBS

KARINA AYBAR-JACOBS is a Dominican-born and raised activist who came to the United States in 1999. She is the Program Director at the Nuevo Amanecer/New Dawn Program against Domestic Violence, an award winning program that serves more than 1,000 women and children every year. She joined the outstanding team of the Nuevo Amanecer Program from the Dominican Women's Development Center (DWDC) in 2005.

Ms. Aybar-Jacobs is a young womanist who is very passionate about raising consciousness and promoting action around the issues of women's rights, women of color, gender equality, domestic violence and empowerment of the under-served. She has participated during four consecutive years in the Vagina Monologues in Spanish, a play that was created to promote awareness against violence towards women. She is an active organizer of the citywide "Brides March Against Domestic Violence" every September 26, the organizer of the annual Nov. 25th Conference to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and serves on the steering committee of the Dominican Women's Coalition, a collective of women leaders dedicated to increasing political power and influence in all issues pertaining to Dominican women and the Latino community in New York City.

Ms. Aybar-Jacobs has a Bachelor's Degree in Women's Studies & Sociology and a Masters in Administration and Casework from the Hunter College School of Social Work.



**RENEE
MEHRRRA**

RENEE MEHRRRA is one of the most prominent South Asian broadcast journalists in the New York City region, hosting a long running television program. She is known for her passion for accurate and compelling story telling with in-depth candid reports that have captured the diverse ethnic fiber in the US in an inspirational and incisive manner. Ms. Mehrra has interviewed diverse personalities: from the unsung heroes that have enriched our lives to renowned musicians, artists, philosophers, authors, doctors, entrepreneurs to the crowd-stopping celebrities of Bollywood.

Ms. Mehrra is a tireless advocate for the South Asian community and a civic and community educator, dedicating herself to addressing the needs of immigrant communities of the tri-state area through television and print media and her nonprofit organization POWER to deepen their awareness about their rights as New Americans so they can create their own stories of success. Through the years, she has fostered and built positive working relationships with media partners, community leaders, civic organizations and politicians and has received many awards from appreciative immigrant and social justice partners.



**KALI
NDOYE**

KALI NDOYE has spent the past 40 years as a community organizer, urban planner, housing development specialist, and international activist for women's rights and economic empowerment. She was born and raised in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Brooklyn. Ms. Ndoye calls it a small miracle that she was able to escape the vicious cycle of poverty. She sees the men, woman and children in low-income communities as extended family members and has dedicated her life to empowering others to break the cycle.

During her career, Ms. Ndoye has worked with countless organizations including: The African Islamic Mission, the Fifth Avenue Committee, the Community Service Society, and the New York City Comptroller's Office. Her work has also allowed her to travel the world, organizing, and participating in conferences, seminars, and think-tanks to share her views on and keep abreast of the ever-shifting trends in community development. Her travel-study has taken her to South Africa, Malawi, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, Gambia, Nigeria, India, Thailand, Hong Kong, China, Haiti, and The Bahamas.

Her thirst for knowledge, love of humanity and hope for her community and family fuels Ms. Ndoye's passion and inspires her to keep pushing community residents and organizations to reach their full potential.



ALIZA NISENBAUM

ALIZA NISENBAUM is a visual artist from Mexico City. Her critically-acclaimed recent work focuses on the subject of the undocumented immigrant, creating portraits of Mexican and South American immigrants to the United States who she meets in New York. Those paintings create documents of the undocumented. The slow process of observational painting that Ms. Nisenbaum employs generates the conditions for encounter and conversational exchange between herself and her sitters, which often include group portraits spanning generations.

Ms. Nisenbaum received a Master's of Fine Arts from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2005. Recent one and two-person exhibitions include: Aliza Nisenbaum, Mary Mary, Glasgow (2015), White Columns, New York (2014); Portraits, Letters, Books and Flowers, Lulu, Mexico City (2014); Aliza Nisenbaum and Tadhg McSweeney, Kevin Kavanagh gallery Dublin, Ireland (2013); Aliza Nisenbaum at Immigrant Movement International, Queens, New York (2013). In 2014 she won a Rema Hort Mann Award, and was included in the "Future Greats" section of Art Review Magazine. Her recent show at White Columns was reviewed in Art in American and in the February, 2015 issue of the Brooklyn Rail.

In the fall of 2015, Ms. Nisenbaum will begin her appointment as Assistant Professor in Visual Arts at Columbia University.



**NINAJ
RAOUL**

NINAJ RAOUL is a co-founder and community organizer at Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees (HWHR), an organization founded in 1992 to respond to the human needs of Haitian refugees and immigrants in the U.S. fleeing persecution. Through education, community organizing, leadership development and collective action, HWHR members empower themselves as they struggle for social and economic justice. Today HWHR integrates lessons about workers' rights and immigrants' rights in every ESL class, while encouraging participation in social justice campaigns on issues such as Immigrants' Rights, Equity in Education, Domestic Workers Rights, and the Birthright Campaigns for Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic. They conduct leadership and organizing trainings for adult literacy learners that help Haitian women make global connections to local realities. HWHR has also produced powerful films about immigrant exploitation and exclusion.

Ms. Raoul is a Fellow of the Petra Foundation, a recipient of the Union Square Awards, the National Organization of Woman - Susan B. Anthony award and the Dr. Antonia Pantoja Bilingual Advocacy Award. She continues to mobilize her community to deliver services, and fight for workers' rights from a woman's perspective. She travels to and from Haiti, where HWHR has been providing solidarity support to women run organizations to help disaster relief efforts.



**SUSAN
SHAH**

SUSAN SHAH is the Chief of Staff at the Vera Institute of Justice where she advances the organization's strategic direction and aligns organizational performance to support vitality and growth. As a member of the Institute's leadership, she acts as a liaison to Vera's Executive Director to problem solve and review project concepts and ideas for investment. From 2008-2015, Ms. Shah was a program director with Vera's Center on Immigration and Justice and guided police, justice officials, and lawyers in improving immigrants' access to justice and safety. Also at Vera, she directed the Unaccompanied Children Program, which increases legal representation for immigrant children with no parents or adult guardians to assist them in deportation proceedings. Prior to joining Vera in 2006, Ms. Shah directed a cancer prevention education, research, and training program tailored for New York City's immigrant communities and was an associate in the immigration practice group of Bryan Cave LLP.

Ms. Shah has dedicated her career to improve the lives of those who are vulnerable and marginalized by laws, policies, and inadequate services. She earned a law degree from Northeastern University School of Law, a Master's of Public Health from Tufts University, and a Bachelor's Degree in journalism from Drake University.



**ELSIE
SAINT LOUIS**

ELSIE SAINT LOUIS is the Executive Director of Haitian-Americans United for Progress. Prior to serving in this capacity, Ms. Saint Louis was the agency's Director of Planning and Development and served on the Board. Ms. Saint Louis has strongly contributed to the agency's growth through her grant writing skills and her expertise in program development.

Ms. Saint Louis has held past executive positions with the New York State Insurance Reciprocal, the Catholic Medical Center, the Archdiocese of New York and CK Partners on Wall Street and in the United Kingdom. She holds Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Business Administration.

She serves on the Board of the New York Immigration Coalition, the York College President's Council, and Congressman Gregory Meeks' Immigration Task Force.

Haitian-Americans United for Progress is a not-for-profit community based organization that helps low-income families and individuals to live healthy and productive lives. HAUP was initially founded in 1975 to promote the welfare of Haitian refugees and immigrants.



**HAYDEE
ZAMBRANA**

HAYDEE ZAMBRANA was born in Puerto Rico and arrived in New York City in the 1960s. She earned a Bachelor's Degree from Audrey Cohen College and a Master's Degree in Bilingual Guidance Counseling from St. John's University.

Ms. Zambrana's desire to help the community led her to fulfill her lifelong goal helping people help themselves. Patience and empathy are her strengths. She is interested in learning capacity building skills in order to help immigrant women. She has been successful in helping many immigrant women and girls and is the founder of the first Hispanic non-profit organization in Queens. She runs Mujeres Latinas en Accion (Latin Women for Action) which is committed to leadership, self-sufficiency, good citizenship, organizing, advocacy and development, and empowerment of Latina women and their families. The agency does not discriminate on the basis of the individual's race, language, sexual orientation, and physical impediments.

Fellowship Faculty/Staff



AZI KHALILI



KAYHAN IRANI

This Fellowship is directed by Azi Khalili and classes are co-facilitated by Ms. Khalili and Kayhan Irani.

AZI KHALILI is the Executive Director of Language Access Initiatives at the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA). She previously served as an independent consultant, designing and facilitating leadership development workshops for executive directors, managers and front-line workers. Ms. Khalili provided strategic policy guidance to immigrant rights, human rights and women's organizations; designed interactive participatory results-based conferences and strategic planning sessions.

Prior to her consulting career, Ms. Khalili was the Deputy Commissioner for MOIA. Before her appointment at the Mayor's Office, she was one of ten Children and Family Fellows with the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Ms. Khalili was the founding Executive Director of Youthbase, a not-for-profit organization that worked with the New York City Department of Education to provide youth-centered HIV/AIDS education to over 400,000 high school students.

Born in Iran, Ms. Khalili earned a Bachelor's Degree from the New School's Eugene Lang College and a Master's of Public Health

from Columbia University. She was a Charles H. Revson Fellow at Columbia University. During the past fifteen years, Ms. Khalili has also facilitated numerous national and international workshops on leadership development, eliminating racism and sexism.

KAYHAN IRANI is an Emmy-award winning writer, a popular educator, and a Theater of the Oppressed trainer. She designs and directs socially engaged arts projects for community based organizations, government agencies, and international NGOs. She facilitates workshops and trainings in popular education methods, Theater of the Oppressed, and story-based strategies for educators, organizers, and change-makers of all kinds.

Her published work includes *Telling Stories to Change the World: Global Voices on the Power of Narrative to Build Community and Make Social Justice Claims* (Routledge, 2008), and *Culturally Relevant Arts Education for Social Justice: A Way Out of No Way*. (Routledge, 2015). Kayhan is a board member of *freeDimensional*, an organization helping artists around the world who are targeted because of their art.

**Special Thanks to
the Members of the Nominating Committee**

Ana-Maria Archila Co-Executive Director,
Center for Popular Democracy

Angela Fernandez Executive Director,
Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrants Rights

Taryn Higashi Executive Director,
Unbound Philanthropy

Anita Khashu Executive Director,
Four Freedoms Fund

Tynesha McHarris Director of Community Leadership,
Brooklyn Community Foundation

Anna Olivera President,
New York Women's Foundation

Rosemonde Pierre Louis Commissioner,
NYC Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence

Maria Torres-Springer President,
NYC Economic Development Corporation

Maya Wiley Counsel to the Mayor,
City Hall

Jo Ann Yoo Executive Director,
Asian American Fund





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RESPONSIBLE
ENGAGING
INTEGRITY
OPPORTUNITY
VALUES
POWER
STRATEGIC
CHOICE
FAIR
REAL
FUTURE
SUSTAINABLE
INTELLIGENCE
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Bill de Blasio
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Immigrant Affairs

Nisha Agarwal
Commissioner