

The Voices of the Leaders

DECEMBER 2023

THE PINKERTON ADVANCED Leadership Network brings together leaders of color from New York City’s nonprofit youth development community. Launched more than two years ago as part of the Pinkerton Foundation’s Racial Equity Initiative, the PALN was designed to offer responsive support, resources and learning opportunities for BIPOC CEOs and Executive Directors among the Foundation’s grantee organizations. The first two-year cohort included thirteen leaders representing organizations large and small. They met monthly to discuss management and strategic issues, learn from distinguished speakers and, above all, share experiences. The sessions were augmented by a two-day retreat and individual executive coaching sessions tailored to needs identified by the leaders themselves.

Although each of the leaders was shaped by their individual perspectives and histories, they quickly forged a powerful bond based on their common challenges and experiences. During the program, they agreed to participate in a series of in-depth interviews to describe their pathways to leadership—and to share insights that might illuminate the way for other leaders of color in the nonprofit sector. The result is this Voices of the Leaders report. Through their stories and their comments, we hope to shed light on the leaders’ unique journeys and give voice to views and experiences that have all too often been silenced historically. We also hope that their

insights will provide valuable background on the challenges that leaders of color face and prompt thoughtful—although sometimes difficult—conversations with current and prospective allies in the field.

Their thoughts are as varied as the leaders themselves, but several themes emerged that mirror experiences cited by other leaders of color in surveys, evaluations and research studies. Major challenges include:

- 1. The Pressure to be Perfect:** Many BIPOC leaders believe that they must perform flawlessly to counter racial stereotypes to achieve personal and professional success. With no margin for error, they feel that they must prove themselves “exceptional” to be considered equal to their white counterparts.
- 2. The Burden to Represent:** Unlike other chief executives in the field, these leaders of color feel the weight of representing their entire communities. Any misstep, they sense, could reflect poorly not only on themselves but on others succeeding them in leadership positions. The stakes—and the pressure to produce significant change—are even higher when the leaders live and work in their own communities.
- 3. A Sense of Isolation:** In dealing with their unique challenges, executives of color often feel a sense of loneliness and anxiety. With largely white boards and funders, these leaders have fewer trusted mentors and role models than their counterparts. And that sense of isolation magnifies the pressure to strive for perfection.

Behind these themes, the numbers tell an alarming story. Despite recent efforts to advance elements of a racial equity agenda for communities in need—including an emphasis on wealth-building, workforce, educational, economic, and/or political outcomes—achieving similar progress for leaders working in social enterprises continues to be underprioritized and seemingly unattainable. According to a 2021 Boardsource Report, as of 2019, only 13 percent of nonprofit CEOs and Executive Directors self-identify as a person of color, up slightly

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from 10 percent in 2016. These statistics are even more striking considering that roughly 40 percent of the U.S. population identify as people of color. In the seminal Race to Lead report by the Building Movement Project, the authors note that the nonprofit racial leadership gap has persisted far too long, adding: “Studies show the percentage of people of color in the executive director/CEO role has remained under 20 percent for the last 15 years even as the country becomes more diverse.”

Often Undercapitalized

CEOS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS of color in the nonprofit sector are also typically undercapitalized in every conceivable way, particularly in the areas of fundraising and compensation. A recent study confirmed that, on average, BIPOC executives received lower compensation than their white counterparts noting, “White men obtained the highest median compensation of all gender and racial/ethnic groups studied.” And despite a popular and persistent myth, psychic income –the positive feeling derived from doing “good”– isn’t enough to offset the pay gap. As a result, BIPOC leaders often make tremendous and invisible sacrifices and adopt a subsistent existence for themselves and their families. Compounding the problem, CEOs and Executive Directors of color traditionally attract significantly less organizational funding than their white counterparts. A report by The Bridgespan Group and Echoing Green found that in a study of nonprofit organizations applying to the Echoing Green program, “Revenues of the Black-led organizations are 24 percent smaller than the revenues of their white-led counterparts, and the unrestricted net assets of the Black-led organizations are 76 percent smaller than their white-led counterparts.” As sobering as these findings are, the trends are notably worse for Black women executives leading nonprofit organizations.

Without change, the racial leadership gap will only continue to grow. When current CEOs and EDs of color are asked why they are leaving those roles, their answers echo the responses of others who have chosen not to pursue leadership positions in the first place. Both groups cite a number of factors, including: severe financial under resourcing in fundraising and compen-

sation; a lack of support from key stakeholders; little or no time for wellness or self-care; and a lack of access to spaces that embrace and support diverse leadership. Other research has indicated that leaders of color find cohort-based or affinity-based groups valuable, particularly those that encourage self-care or facilitate ties to value-added networks of individual or enterprises that are otherwise inaccessible.

Like a number of funders across the country, The Pinkerton Foundation was moved to respond to these and other equity-related trends. Sparked by the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic and the racial reckoning prompted by the murder of George Floyd, the foundation initially committed \$1 million over two years to support its Equity initiative. Initial unrestricted grants went to organizations deemed to be doing exceptional work on race and civil rights issues. Other grants went to organizations led by people of color that were disproportionately affected by the pandemic or organizational challenges. The Pinkerton Advanced Leadership Network was created to specifically address structural disadvantages faced by leaders of color in the youth development field and to promote leadership development and cooperation between those leaders. Now in its third year, the foundation has committed a total of \$290,000 to the equity initiative and just recently announced that applications are open for a second leadership network cohort focused on serving BIPOC executives who report directly to their organizations’ Executive Director/CEO/President.

Encouraging Other Funders

WE ARE UNDER no illusion that one local initiative, no matter how thoughtful or well-intentioned, can reverse trends that were decades in the making. On the other hand, we believe that through programs like the Pinkerton Advanced Leadership Network, we can support roughly one-third of the foundation’s grantees led by chief executives of color and help deepen the talent pool of new leaders to come. Finally, we believe that by telling the stories of current leaders we might encourage other funders to join our cause of deepening investments to support the development, sustainability, and wellness of leaders of color driving impact in the nonprofit sector.

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VOICES OF THE LEADERS PROFILES

2021-2023

Pinkerton Advanced Leadership Network (PALN) Fellows

MELODY CAPOTE 4 <i>Executive Director</i> Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute	DOMINIQUE JONES 10 <i>Executive Director</i> Global Kids
GARY CLEMONS 5 <i>Executive Director</i> Friends of the Children – New York	ARACELIS LUCERO 11 <i>Executive Director</i> Masa
ANGELA DIAZ 6 <i>Director</i> Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center	AISHA NORRIS 12 <i>Co-Founder & Executive Director</i> Dare to Revitalize Education through Arts & Mediation (DREAM!)
MARILYN FRASER 7 <i>Chief Executive Officer</i> Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health	MARKELL PARKER 13 <i>Executive Director</i> Summer on the Hill
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SHAUWEA HAMILTON 9 <i>Chief Regional Officer</i> Bottom Line	JADAYAH SPENCER 15 <i>Executive Director</i> International Youth Leadership Institute
	KELLY VILAR 16 <i>Chief Executive Officer</i> Staten Island Urban Center



Melody Capote

Executive Director
Caribbean Cultural Center
African Diaspora Institute

MELODY CAPOTE'S passion for the arts and devotion to her community traces back to her upbringing in East Harlem. During her childhood, Melody's love of the arts was primarily fueled by her enjoyment of dance and her desire to one day become a choreographer. While attending college, Melody majored in dance. In her spare time, she also volunteered in a community organization with her mother and aunt, teaching young people about Puerto Rican arts and culture. "I went from studying and performing modern dance and ballet to learning about drumming and doing bomba dancing in my bare feet. My work outside of school showed me a different way of coming to the dance: lifting up my culture and embracing my heritage."

Melody's experience outside of school led her to transfer to another college and shift her major to Black History with a focus on Latin American Studies that allowed her to deepen her understanding of her culture and history. At about the time she changed schools, Melody's aunt co-founded a new organization called the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCADI). Melody joined the organization and for over nearly forty years, she has played a vital role in building and leading the institution. She was appointed Executive Director in 2017.

Since becoming Executive Director, Melody's focus has been ensuring CCADI's independence in order to continue documenting and preserving the world of the African Diaspora. At home, Melody's family calls themselves a "rainbow people"—a group of people with a rich range of skin tones and backgrounds of Latino and Black descent. Melody brings this celebration of diversity into her work every single day.

Safe Spaces Amplify Voices

MELODY'S ADVICE TO other leaders in the sector is to remember the power of creating space for everyone you lead to have a voice. Her goal is to encourage an environment where people feel like they can express their opinions without recrimination. "I don't expect everyone to agree with me or with everything I propose. So, when there's a new project, idea, or problem, I manage by utilizing talking circles. Everyone gets an opportunity to present their opinion, and we treat everyone like a leader because, in my organization, I expect everyone to lead."

When it comes to funding, Melody's hope for the future is to see funds distributed in a way that ensures equity and inclusion for a more diverse range of leaders

and organizations. She recalls how during the pandemic, many funders increased total annual grantmaking (above the 5 percent mandate) and embraced a policy of deploying unrestricted grants. "When COVID hit, funders told us, do whatever you need to do with this money. Use it to keep your doors open in whatever ways your communities need most. That indicated trust in us as leaders on the front lines."

Sustained Investments

MELODY NOTICES A recent shift to a "post-pandemic" mindset with many funders cutting back their funding levels and returning to more restricted grants. "The pre-pandemic period often referred to as 'normal' was never good for poor or Black and Brown communities when it came to securing resources and getting support for these communities." Melody would like to see funders reflect on their practices during the pandemic and realize how well things worked. If they would do that, she believes they would embrace these shifts and make those changes permanent. "We need more funders to invest in our organizations, not just donations. Leaders can't plan for the longevity of our work and programs when funding comes in spurts once a year."

CCCDI might have begun as her aunt's labor of love, but Melody's connection to the work goes far beyond a familial obligation. "We are an organization that focuses on our mission, on driving racial and social justice and equity, but to me, these words mean far more. This work isn't what I do from nine to five. This is how I live my life."

THE CARIBBEAN CULTURAL Center African Diaspora Institute (CCADI) promotes the history, cultures, customs, and traditions of the Caribbean Islands and their peoples. It is an artist-centered organization advancing cultural equity and promoting racial and social justice for communities of African descent through performances, concerts, programs, educational activities, research, and advocacy. CCCADI's programs serve children/youth, families, young professionals, elders, local and international artists, and practitioners of African-based spiritual traditions. CCADI youth programs support students in navigating and contributing to conversations through art and music about race, racism, and anti-Black violence.



Gary Clemons

Executive Director
Friends of the Children –
New York

GARY CLEMONS was born in New Jersey and grew up on an 11-acre plot won by his great grandmother in a card game. Gary was raised by his mother and father along with his grandmother and great aunt who lived next door. His father inspired him to have a strong sense of identity and work ethic. Gary never found school to be an affirming place, yet he excelled as an outstanding athlete. While growing up between New Jersey and Inglewood, CA, he played football and was on the track team. His success in sports led to a football scholarship to attend Portland State University.

Be Curious – Discovering Purpose

GARY RECOUNTED HOW an injury during his senior year, along with facing unjust criminal penalties led him to quit school for a time and become homeless. These experiences prompted Gary's passion for helping marginalized youth and families. He credits sheer serendipity and the support of positive adults for helping him overcome unfortunate circumstances. Gary eventually started his own dog training business after finding an abandoned rottweiler puppy and spending his time at the library reading everything he could find on dog training and behavior. Time passed and Gary bought a house in Portland. It happened to be next door to the Friends of the Children headquarters. Gary was curious: "I Googled it and I literally started crying in my living room because it just really resonated with me. A lot of people poured into me and when I needed those seeds to grow, those seeds grew."

Gary's experiences and his identity as a Black man immersed in the culture of hip-hop have shaped how he conducts himself and how he leads. He is passionate about centering the identities of the population he serves, especially that of Black and Latinx people; He remains steadfast in his mission to provide an affirming institution for people of color. He also laments how far too often there is a disconnect between the leadership of foundations and nonprofits and the participants they serve. "I think it's important to live in and practice the culture of the communities they serve to have a full understanding of how to engage and know what is needed. So, I think that [foundations] have to trust the expertise that people have ... to find the right solutions.

Trust the Expertise

GARY'S ADVICE TO other nonprofit leaders is to find and build your leadership community because the work of nonprofits is hard and often isolating. "I didn't realize how lonely it would be as a CEO. You're the

only person that kind of sees it all." Given the nature of their roles –with few peers, intense scrutiny, financial pressure and the need to keep a lot of information confidential– nonprofit leaders need to have people they can talk to candidly. Gary recommends having an executive coach, good therapist, strong social network and like-minded board members who you can talk things through with.

Gary now lives and works in New York and strives to make Friends of the Children a space where people can be themselves. "I just encourage all people to show up as their authentic self... the more everyone shows up as their authentic self, the better it is going to be for everyone." Gary wears Chuck Taylors ("Chucks") and sports several tattoos. His desire to demonstrate to young people to be themselves and not being defined by either their situation, environment, or others' perceptions. His message is clear: "who you are belongs in all spaces".

FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN – New York is a chapter of a nationwide organization dedicated to breaking the cycle of generational poverty through salaried, professional mentoring. Friends of the Children's unique model centers around the power of consistent, caring adult relationships. Well-trained, professional mentors are hired to work with eight children and their families from early childhood into college. The "Friends" spend three to four hours every week with the children. Decades of research have demonstrated that this very specialized, long-term mentoring relationship enables these children to blossom from kindergarten through graduation, and beyond.



Angela Diaz

Director
Mount Sinai Adolescent
Health Center

BORN IN THE DOMINICAN Republic, Angela Diaz came to New York City as a teenager and became motivated to become a physician after a long stay in a hospital. The kindness of the doctors and nurses inspired her to pursue a career in medicine. Now Dr Angela Diaz pays that kindness forward to the young people of New York City as the Director of Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center.

Angela's journey has not been without challenges. "Because I'm an immigrant, I sometimes think when people look at me they don't know who I am or what I do, and they may think that I'm less capable." But Angela also celebrates her identity and the diversity of the city she works in, noting the good fortune she has in being able to interact with all types of people. "Almost on a daily basis, I can see the greatness of the US, and also the disparities." She believes that the greater the diversity of the staff of a nonprofit, the stronger it becomes. "I feel that the more diverse the board and the staff, the more comfortable it is for a person of color. You don't feel that you are the only one. People understand you, they understand your culture, your perspective."

Being a Role Model

ANGELA FINDS YOUNG people very endearing and enjoys working in partnership with them. She is especially emboldened by being able to be a role model for BIPOC youth in the city. "Ninety-four percent of the youth that I work with are Black and Brown. So, when they know that I'm the Director, the person running the whole thing, they are very proud." The same is true for the young women she works with: "I think for young women, whether cis or trans, it's really important for them to see that they can do things or they can be in charge, or that they can pursue different careers."

If You Care, You are Listening

ANGELA IS MOTIVATED by a desire to help achieve a just, equitable society. Although she, and many other nonprofit leaders, are faced by many challenges, she encourages others –and particularly young people– to hold on to hope. She knows that the young people of today exist in a radically different world from the one she grew up in. For her, listening carefully to young people and their needs is an integral part of providing quality care: "We need to understand different perspectives. I think one of the reasons that industry –including nonprofit and including myself– is struggling is because sometimes we don't understand the perspective of a different cohort or generation. Their needs

are different perhaps than my generation. And yet we tend to see them from our own perspective". She notes that, for example, work-life balance and mental health are more important to young people than ever before. She hopes that in the future. Funders will respond by providing greater support in those areas.

ESTABLISHED IN 1968, the Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center breaks down barriers to health care for youth ages 10-26 by providing high quality, comprehensive, integrated services—all under one roof, at no cost to patients. The center serves 12,000 youth annually, helping them heal, build resiliency, and grow into the healthiest version of themselves. Care includes medical, sexual and reproductive health, behavioral and mental health, health education, nutrition, and legal services. The center also provides specialized care for transgender and LGBTQ+ youth, young people living with HIV, young parents and their children, and survivors of trauma including abuse and trafficking.



Marilyn Fraser

Chief Executive Officer
Arthur Ashe Institute for
Urban Health

MARILYN FRASER was born and raised in Guyana, the daughter of two healthcare professionals. Her father was a dispenser (pharmacist), and her mother a nurse midwife. Marilyn was always intrigued with medicine and fascinated by her parents' medical books. Even at a young age, she had a particular interest in making medical information clear and understandable for people in her community. Her inspiration to pursue medicine eventually led to medical school.

Empowering the Next Generation

AFTER GRADUATION, Dr. Marilyn Fraser began working as a program coordinator at Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health. Her talks with people in the community about their health deepened her commitment to community engagement. She found the Institute's pipeline program that trained young people of color for careers in the healthcare industry particularly meaningful. As her commitment to the organization grew, she worked her way up from program coordinator to director of research, to deputy director, and eventually to CEO.

Marilyn enjoys the young people she works with and sees her identity as a woman of color as an important asset. "One of the greatest things about my work and something I really enjoy is the opportunity to work with young people of color. They can see what they can aspire to, because they get to see individuals of color, like themselves, in positions of leadership."

Marilyn acknowledges that her identity as a chief executive of color creates challenges in navigating spaces that are predominantly led by white men. She notes the paradox in women of color often develop strength and resilience from having to operate in these settings. In fact, Marilyn remains optimistic about the future for other leaders who are women of color. "There are great opportunities... We can mobilize, we can come together as women of color, we can make our voices heard... we can be the voice for others who are coming behind us."

It is Ok to Ask for Help

MARILYN'S ADVICE TO young people in her program and other aspiring non-profit CEOs is to: seek out mentors: "It is ok to ask for help." While in medical school and early in her career, she didn't have mentors. "When you are used to being successful, it becomes hard to seek help," she adds. "Many individuals end up struggling privately because they were too embarrassed to ask for help." Marilyn notes that many people are not aware of the resources that are available to help individuals in

navigating various challenges. "I wish that I knew more about intentionally having mentors when I was younger... It is really important to find mentors all through your career to provide guidance along the way."

Don't Forget to Take Time Off

AFTER LEADING THE Institute for over six years, Marilyn advises other leaders "to pace yourself". Speaking to all-too-common leadership burn-out, she says: "I would say to put time off in your calendar. You really need to be intentional about taking time off for yourself." Especially as a BIPOC leader, she says it may be easy to feel isolated in the job. She emphasizes the importance of having spaces where, in her words, "we can just exhale, where we can pay attention to wellness, wellness for ourselves and the people that work with us".

Her message is not only for other leaders, but also the organizations that fund them. She hopes that funders would invest more in professional development. "Leadership and professional development are important. This should be sustained and should be enhanced, because opportunities are not often given to CEOs to advance their careers... There are always things to learn, there are always things that could be enhanced. Funders may not think about that." She also emphasizes the importance of funding capacity building and general operating support. As she puts it, "Programs do not operate in a vacuum; lights have to be kept on, building spaces have to be rented, and administrative costs have to be paid."

THE ARTHUR ASCHE Institute for Urban Health was created in 1992 by tennis champion, humanitarian and activist, Arthur Ashe, to reduce the impact of disease among populations of color in urban areas, improve access to care and increase knowledge about health and wellness issues. The Health Science Academy of the Arthur Ashe Institute provides academically talented high school students of color with a three-year, after-school enrichment program in health sciences. Many of the students are from neighborhoods that are traditionally underserved. Students are recruited prior to their sophomore year in high school and over six school semesters study the human body's major organ systems. In addition to the academic component, students learn soft skills (presentation, resume writing) and shadow health care professionals to learn about the day-to-day details of the work.



Erika Halstead

Chief Executive Officer
Minds Matter

AS THE CHILD of an immigrant, Erika Halstead understands that intelligence, hard work, and resilience are not always enough—especially as a Latina in America—to guarantee success in achieving one’s goals. “Both my parents were engineers at a time in this country when that was not a career you saw many or even any people of color. In the 1970s, my mom was the first woman and first person of color ever hired as an engineer at a major oil company.” For Erika, the importance of investing in and empowering people of color to pursue their personal and professional dreams was in her DNA and it fueled her commitment to continuing her family’s legacy of inspiring others.

Shaping Lives, Changing Paths

AFTER COMPLETING COLLEGE, Erika initially accepted a job in the private sector, but soon realized she needed a role that would allow her to help others pursue their potential. She instead took a job as a bilingual teacher in a Texas public school, and she notes, “My whole life has been dedicated to the 100 third graders that I taught as an elementary teacher. Every decision I have made since then has been based on how to serve those kids better.” Entering a career path focused on serving others changed the trajectory of Erika’s life, but not always in ways she could have predicted. Over the past two decades, Erika has served as a classroom educator, grant-maker, and college lecturer. She has been the Executive Director of Minds Matter NYC since 2015 and was recently promoted to CEO.

Erika advises other leaders committed to a career in service to not be afraid of a detour in their career path. It is critical for BIPOC leaders interested in becoming CEOs to focus on building a community of support and to seek out other CEOs to learn from and lean on. Erika recognizes that leading an organization can be isolating and encourages leaders in these positions to seek support and advice. “Find other CEOs and find them fast... and lean heavily on them”, she says. “Do not be afraid to ask all the questions and seek out all the advice you can from those who have been there before you.”

Breaking Biases

ERIKA BELIEVES THAT funders can play a critical role in supporting BIPOC leaders in the non-profit sector. She advises funders to engage in self-reflection and consider institutional and individual goals when supporting organizations led by people of color. Erika urges funders to lead by example to model attitudes, behaviors, and policies that remove bias from many of the processes considered “standard” in philanthropy.

“Funders need to widen their aperture of expectation when it comes to BIPOC CEOs/EDs. You can’t expect people of color to be white middle-class Americans of a different color... They may not have the same network as white leaders, they may not have gone to the same kinds of colleges, speak the same way, or present in the same fashion. I think funders must get very, very clear on the objective criteria you are using to assess the capability and impact a leader of color is having. If the real goal of philanthropy is impact, it shouldn’t be considered a negative if that impact doesn’t come packaged in a way you are not used to. Many leaders of color I know have shared experiences where they are viewed as different, synonymized with less than, which limits their access to opportunities and resources that could aid them in driving deeper impact.”

MINDS MATTER NYC connects driven and determined students from low-income families with the people, preparation, and possibilities to succeed in college, create their future, and change the world. Minds Matter NYC is a seven-year program that begins in students’ sophomore year of high school. Minds Matter NYC offers its students individualized mentorship and academic instruction that provides them with the resources, information, and guidance they need to gain admission to, enroll in, and graduate from four-year colleges.



Shauwea Hamilton

*Chief Regional Officer
Bottom Line*

SHAUWEA HAMILTON was born into a military family. Her mother grew up on military bases. Her father was in the Air Force, and her grandfather who was also a veteran. Although her family's connection to the military was multigenerational, Shauwea's parents' greatest aspiration for their children was for them to pursue higher education. In her parent's minds, ensuring their children obtained college degrees was everything. And it became the North Star Shauwea, and her sister were guided toward their entire childhood.

Shauwea's journey through college included transferring schools, witnessing her family overextend themselves financially to afford college, and struggling to feel a clear sense of direction for her post-graduate pursuits. After graduation, Shauwea decided to invest her time and energy in jobs that would bring as much financial stability as possible. It was only later in her career that she sought to reconnect to her struggles and experiences as a young person. She turned her sights towards a career in education, first starting in K-12 public education and then eventually joining Bottom Line as NYC Executive Director and eventually becoming a Chief Regional officer.

Her professional journey has been marked by the pandemic, a divisive and violence-inducing political landscape, and a national racial reckoning. The world has changed, and so has Shauwea's leadership: "I feel braver saying things ... that counter white supremacist culture, and I call things as I see them." As a Black and biracial woman, she has often had to contend with the conflicting expectations of those around her. "Because of the spaces I've lived, worked, and been educated in, I've internalized racism that compels me to believe I should accept others' expectations for me to be perfect and work harder –while suspecting that some of these same people may also be waiting for me to make a mistake."

From Only to Inclusive

SHAUWEA ADVISES OTHER leaders to not let your status as "first" or "only" distract you from using your power to open up space for other leaders of other less visible identities. Throughout her career, she has often been the first Black woman in many of the roles she has held, and for her, those opportunities brought a significant responsibility: to make sure that whatever table she is sitting at, she does not remain the "only" Black woman at the table for very long. "One thing I'm always thinking about is how I continue to push my comfort level and ask myself: What are the responsibilities that I hold in service of others?"

From "Wait and See" to Trust

SHAUWEA URGES FUNDERS to lean in and trust leaders of color more than they typically do, especially new ones. One example Shauwea cites is her experience coming into a role following a white predecessor, where colleagues adopted a "wait and see" approach to her leadership instead of trusting that she was competent. "It's never really clear what they're waiting for or want to see, but I've heard this too often and exclusively towards leaders of color." Shauwea would like to see more funders support leaders of color by "asking how you can support in an open-ended way."

In an increasingly complex world, Shauwea is focused on ensuring that her leadership drives impact by bringing ease and joy into the lives of those on her teams that she partners with. "Bringing ease into how I show up and, therefore, how others feel they have permission to show up, just makes for a more comfortable context to work in. That leads to people bringing their best selves to this work which only drives better outcomes for our students."

BOTTOM LINE partners with students from first-generation and low-income backgrounds to support their journey to graduate from college and pursue meaningful careers. Bottom Line's vision is to dramatically transform urban communities by producing thousands of new career-ready college graduates. Bottom Line was founded on the belief that students need a mentor and a guide to succeed in the college application process and throughout college. By providing consistent one-on-one support, through its Access Programs, Bottom Line Advisors have partnered with thousands of degree-aspiring high school students to build a list of best-fit, affordable colleges.



Dominique Jones

Executive Director
Global Kids

GROWING UP IN Central Ohio, Dominique Jones shared similar experiences with the young people she serves today. Her mother, an educator, made it a priority to give Dominique access to programs with enriching opportunities to explore her interests. This experience of participating in community programs sparked a lifelong passion for supporting young people. Before she even knew that there was a career in providing vital opportunities for growth, Dominique recalls that she always wanted to make sure every kid had opportunities like the ones she had benefited from.

Defining Yourself - Identifying Your Assets

FROM AN EARLY AGE, Dominique had great pride for her community and appreciated its many resources. Not everyone in her childhood shared Dominique's view. Dominique recalls a detective's visit to her high school as part of a program sponsored by the local police department. When she told him about her paper route in her neighborhood; he said he would never consider working there. "He proceeded to tell me that it was the absolute worst neighborhood," she recalls. Then fourteen, she thought to herself: "Wait a minute. I live in that neighborhood. There are assets in this neighborhood. There are people who work very hard." It was then that Dominique realized that only she had the power to define herself or her community. This would not be the only time Dominique would be required to defend her own worth, especially as a woman and a leader of color.

Dominique is proud of her identity as a Black woman: "I was raised by Black women. I went to a school for Black women, Spelman College. I'm involved in sororities and associations that are for Black women. So, the idea of being a Black woman is really important to me. Yet the challenges persist in now others see me as an African-American woman, I've also been [repeatedly] confronted with challenges about my own competency or capacity to do this work at a very high level".

Diversity in Decision Making

ALTHOUGH HER IDENTITY has led to challenges, Dominique also views her success in a white, male-dominated world as an asset. In serving BIPOC youth, she sees it as helping people like herself; and she also wants to make sure that young people of color have strong examples of leaders who affirm their culture, their experiences and where they live. Indeed, in Dominique's view, leaders of color have a unique level of understanding of their communities that should be highly valued. As a

result, Dominique believes funders should create more opportunities for leaders of color to be part of the decision-making process. She stresses the importance of seeking out organizations led by BIPOC leaders, instead of deferring to the regular faces and places. "It's time," she says, "to start looking for new and fresh voices and organizations to be able to have a more expansive view about how problems in our communities can be addressed and solved."

As a nonprofit leader, Dominique advances the mission of her organization everyday by embracing the fact that it's a work-in-progress and nothing is perfect. She acknowledges that it is hard work to sustain nonprofit organizations and was especially difficult during the pandemic. But says it's not possible to succeed without the support and grace of others -- government, foundations, boards, staff, friends and family. Dominique implores foundations to look for ways to extend that support and grace and to continue working to help nonprofit leaders, especially those of color. Although the work isn't easy, Dominique admits she never expected it to be.

GLOBAL KIDS EQUIPS students with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve academic success, develop college and career readiness skills, and come into their own as global citizens and community leaders. Teens enroll in one of five programs that focus on citizenry, global issues, media literacy and college and career readiness. Each program teaches young people about worldwide issues while building their research, writing, and analytical skills.



Aracelis Lucero

Executive Director
Masa

THE DAUGHTER OF Mexican immigrant parents, Aracelis (pronounced /a-RE-sa-LAZ/) Lucero grew up in the Bronx at a time when there were few in her neighborhood who shared her background. Many people assumed she was Asian: “Nobody knew where Mexico was, people would say that I came from China. And so, from a very young age, I felt very strongly about my identity and making sure that I clarified how to say my name correctly... I also remember being really proud of being brown”. Aracelis remarked that her parents made sure that she and her older siblings maintained their pride in their heritage. At the same time, their parents instilled in them the importance of education. Aracelis excelled at school. “We had amazing teachers who really cared about us,” she recalls. I don’t think that we would have been able to really do well in school had we not had those teachers.”

After high school, Aracelis attended Middlebury College in Vermont. In her first year, she went abroad to do development work in Mexico with an Indigenous community. She enjoyed it so much that she almost didn’t want to come back. Her experience there was far different from her time spent in Middlebury, a place of affluence and privilege. “The contrast between life at Middlebury - and these spaces where poverty was extreme. Yet, the [village] felt like home... I felt a deep kinship with the people. And that’s when I knew what I wanted to do with my life”.

Pursuing Passion

ARACELIS PLANNED TO return to Mexico to find boots-on-the-ground organizations that were working on education and migration. However, in her junior year, she secured a job to work at Lehman Brothers after graduation. Faced with this choice, Aracelis spoke to a professor who advised her to work at the bank, gain experience, and return to her passion later on. She followed this advice and worked in finance for six years before leaving to attend grad school. Of her decision to leave her job in finance, she says: “I kept on working to make people rich, and I didn’t want to do that with my time... I had to pull the plug on myself.”

While working at Lehman, Aracelis volunteered at Masa, drawn to its community-led and family engagement approach. Several years later there was an opportunity to become the Executive Director, Aracelis was selected and has been there ever since. When she arrived, the first thing she did was ensure that “Our community wasn’t seen like a charity.” She would often hear “I’m so sorry, you’re from the South Bronx, you poor

thing. I really wanted to transform that narrative.” To do that, Aracelis made sure that everyone ---staff, board and funders--- were talking about the community they serve from a strengths-based perspective.

Embrace Self-Care

ARACELIS CONSIDERS HER identity as a second generation Mexican an asset, but she is mindful to not impose her experiences on others. And, one of the most important aspects of her programming is the way that her participants view themselves. “One thing that I really wanted to make sure that we highlighted... is the importance of being confident in yourself. That includes identity, that includes seeing yourself as a scholar and that your thoughts and using your lens matters”.

Aracelis admits that she struggles with what she believes are harmful Western culture workplace practices. “Burnout is definitely something that I think we hear over and over and over again. You work a lot here. In a lot of nonprofits, you’re doing everything. One person in any position ...is wearing many, many hats.” She recognizes the value of her indigenous cultural teachings and is getting reconnected with practices that promotes self-care. “It is important to make sure that you’re taking care of yourself, make sure that you’re getting up for 30 minutes and walking around, ...[and] make sure that you’re eating.”

Wholistic Support to Nonprofits

ARACELIS SUGGESTS THAT funders can help by asking what is the right amount of money needed for the organization to succeed. “Fundors can better support [us] by not just funding one thing, just the program, but the overhead, the people and the indirect costs which allows the organization to make change happen.”

MASA PARTNERS WITH Mexican and Latino children, youth and families in the South Bronx to develop strong learners who fully participate in and contribute to the larger community. It provides early childhood education, academic support for school-age children, youth development for teens, and adult education and family support for parents. Masa’s community-led, integrated model engages the entire family, grounded in a deep commitment to strengthening literacy, leadership, and power for Mexican, Central American, and Indigenous People.



Aisha Norris

*Co-Founder & Executive
Director*

**Dare to Revitalize
Education through Arts
& Mediation (DREAM!)**

GROWING UP IN the South Bronx, Aisha Norris learned, the power of the arts to give young people in under-resourced communities the confidence, space, and support they need to realize their hidden potential and pursue their dreams. Aisha became a teaching artist after being introduced to video production during a high school media class. After graduation, she was hired to teach at Renaissance University for Community Education, an experience she credits with changing her life. Although Aisha was often the youngest in the room, she realized her insight was respected, and her ideas were often implemented. These early experiences shaped her goal of disrupting the increasing incarceration rates for young people growing up in poverty.

Transformative Power of the Arts

AISHA'S DEEPLY PERSONAL connection to the criminal justice system began at the age of six. She and her older brother were being raised solely by her mother, her father was incarcerated until she entered high school. Then her older brother became involved with the criminal justice system and was subsequently incarcerated for nearly a decade. At home, Aisha was the full beneficiary of her mother's caring presence and support, but outside, she was searching for her place-in her community and the world at large. It was through her participation in arts programs that Aisha found she could be herself. She found a new community of support, where she could speak her mind, share her ideas and reflect on her own experiences while pursuing her interests.

Aisha devoted the early years of her career to developing her skills and confidence as a leader, facilitator, and teaching artist. She realized these skills could also enable her to design a new type of program. Her goal was to serve the scores of young people who, like many of her childhood friends, wound up involved in the criminal justice system. As she launched the art programs, she began training in conflict resolution and restorative practices. This integration of this training with the arts "was really an organic process. Everything just came together naturally, because I saw the way these trainings changed my life and how I dealt with violence, and how I saw the world. When I saw how it changed my life, I said, all of our kids need it. I'm not the only one going through this."

Identity as an Asset

THAT WAS HOW DREAM! was born in 2009. As a gay Black woman, Aisha has faced obstacles but she consid-

ers her identity as an invaluable asset in her work with young people. As she puts it, "To be Black is one strike, to be gay is another strike in the world we live in, but in ways, it's an asset. The young people we serve see themselves in me. You know, because of the way I dress, the way I speak, where I'm from, my life experiences, I'm able to connect with young people right away."

She acknowledges, however that her identities create challenges in her ability to drive impact, Aisha notes that as a leader of color, she has often had to jump through multiple hoops to secure funding. She hopes that as funders reflect on and consider new approaches to their work they recognize the value of supporting leaders like her. "It's crucial to support leaders who are serving the communities that they're from," she says. "These leaders are giving back to young people who often reflect these leaders' younger selves. We have a unique contribution to make to advancing the work of this sector and need more support from funders to do so from a well-resourced position."

DARE TO REVITALIZE Education through Arts & Mediation (DREAM!) helps students and educators gain the confidence and skills to resolve conflicts creatively and productively. DREAM! works inside NYC public schools to develop interactive, experiential, culturally competent trainings. The trainings use the power of theater, media arts, music, and the imagination to communicate the skills of restorative practices, mediation, and nonviolent responses to conflict.



Markell Parker

Executive Director
Summer on the Hill

MARKELL PARKER remembers his childhood as a time when his life was most shaped by the love of his family, the sounds of the burgeoning genre known as Hip Hop music, and days trying to steer clear of the growing drug and gang scene in his community. Markell grew up in Bronxdale Houses (now known as the Sotomayor Houses) in the Bronx, which he describes as a place with “not a lot of prospects and not a lot of opportunity.” Markell also remembers how the depth of poverty in his community inflicted severe trauma, including, but not limited to, incarceration and violence, for so many members of his community. These experiences shaped Markell’s early understanding of the importance of providing young people living in low-income neighborhoods with access, support, and exposure to alternative pathways out of poverty, notably the pursuit of higher education.

Dual Consciousness in Leadership

MARKELL REALIZES THAT his educational journey has provided him with a unique perspective and empathy that has shaped his leadership. Early on Markell was such a strong student that he was able to gain admission to the Oliver Scholars, a program that allowed him to enroll in a boarding school for high school. “Growing up, I had been immersed in neighborhoods that were predominantly Black and Latino and very impoverished. And then, I got into this program and was transported from one end of America to the opposite end. My new world was very white and very affluent. It was a hard adjustment for me. As they say, what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. That experience certainly made me stronger. Even enduring the bad times, the difficulties caused me to develop skills and resilience that made me who I am.” Markell’s story is very similar to many students participating in the Summer on the Hill program, which gives him a valuable perspective on what students in the program are going through.

After college, markell worked as an educator at several independent and public schools. This led him to participate in the Interschool Leadership Institute, a professional development program providing support and leadership coaching for educators of color. The experience affected him greatly: “About nine months after doing that and applying some of the techniques I learned at the Institute, I was offered the job as Executive Director of Summer on the Hill.” Eight years later, Markell continues to be dedicated to the program.

Markell believes leaders of color are uniquely positioned to drive profound impact in the communities

they serve, but often they feel under-resourced, undervalued, and/or under-skilled in their roles. “I always ask myself, when interacting with a colleague, does my race influence the way they see me or their expectations of me? I’m always operating utilizing the ‘double consciousness’ that W.E.B. DuBois talked about, or at least the 21st-century manifestation of it.”

Continuous Learning as a Leadership Superpower

MARKELL URGES NONPROFIT leaders to realize no leader becomes a CEO with all the skills needed to be fully effective on Day 1. Continuous learning is part of the journey of being a nonprofit CEO. Markell believes having a curious mindset and being diligent about recognizing and addressing knowledge, technical or cultural gaps are critical to ensuring success.

Markell wishes more funders (particularly white funders) would recognize that leaders of color “often know something they don’t. We have a perspective on the experience of being devalued because of our race. As leaders of color, we have experienced and heard too often that we are not enough. I’m not saying we know everything, but our voices are often not valued. Funders have the power to ensure money and access flow, and nonprofit leaders of color can use those resources to drive impact and change if they are more empowered to do so.”

Markell’s commitment to helping young people means that he spends as much time as he can with the students he serves. He realizes that the experience is a gift to his leadership. “CEOs are usually focused primarily on strategic and administrative work, and not delivering direct service, but the people we serve are the reason we got into this job... and that’s what gets me out of bed in the morning.”

SUMMER ON THE HILL (SOH) enriches the education of promising, low-income students from The Bronx, Washington Heights, and Harlem by preparing them to attend selective schools and be life-long learners. SOH provides guidance and support to students and families on school choices, applications and financial aid from third grade through high school. SOH’s year-round, project-based curriculum focuses on financial literacy, civics, engineering and media literacy and its co-curriculars are arts, physical education and technology skill building.



Jessica Santana

Executive Director
America on Tech (AOT)

JESSICA SANTANA is a Brooklynite through and through, and her experiences growing up in the East New York and Brownsville area of Brooklyn led her to see first-hand how so many of the resources and opportunities that New York City has to offer its residents typically don't reach the people who need them most. Both of Jessica's parents migrated to New York City from Puerto Rico in the 1950s, and she proudly identifies as a Nuyorican (a blending of the terms New York and Puerto Rican) woman.

Empathy in Action

JESSICA CREDITS HER experience growing up as a New York City public school student for shaping her views as a leader today. "Being a person of color, I see myself reflected in the young people we serve. When they talk about the challenges that they're having, I see how those challenges are deeply connected to my own experience. And I think because I experienced that same thing, I bring a great amount of empathy to my work. I do this work, so other young people don't have to know this struggle".

While Jessica is steadfast in her belief that gender and racial identity do not diminish a person's ability to lead, she does believe that leaders of color in the nonprofit sector frequently encounter unique challenges. "I think leaders from marginalized gender and racial groups have experiences that don't allow them to lead effectively... oftentimes, we are underfunded and severely underserved". She points to a particularly emotionally destructive challenge, faced by many of these leaders, following the murder of George Floyd in June 2020. Instead of grieving and processing their trauma, she says, leaders of color were expected to rally and do even more to support communities, including, but not limited to, focusing their strained capacity on responding to the many new funding opportunities that appeared during this time. "These new opportunities and resources being offered were built on the back of the murder of another Black man, and there wasn't enough space or time provided for the brutality and inhumanity of this moment to be confronted honestly and thoughtfully by those most deeply impacted by it."

Isolation - The Invisible Struggle

SIMILARLY, JESSICA says that leaders of color have to suffer in isolation with few people checking in on how they are doing/feeling in their roles. It's gotten worse in the past few years. As she puts it, "It's been challenging for me to realize that when you are a leader of color in

this space, everyone is kind of listening to you for solutions, and it is very rare for anyone ever to ask you if you're doing okay. Your job as a leader is to learn about and model effective and compassionate leadership constantly, but you often have to do this while simultaneously searching for, and often not finding, spaces where you can be vulnerable with and supported by other people."

Embracing Authenticity

AS JESSICA LOOKS to the future of leadership for people of color she hopes funders will make a permanent shift to multi-year grant awards. "Many of the nonprofits that grantmakers are funding were created and routed out of a problem created through the design of inequitable systems built and reinforced over time. Grantmakers shouldn't think you can undo centuries of injustice with a one-time grant for just one year." Her advice for aspiring nonprofit CEOs of color is to know that it's okay to show up just as you are. "In the beginning stages of my CEO tenure, I felt I was trying to be something I was not... and I realized this was not sustainable. So, my straight wet hair went to my naturally wavy hair. My accent started coming out. I started saying whatever came to my mind, especially if I felt that things were unjust. When you start in this role, there are some things that you will just not know. In those moments, focus on the commitment that you made to the communities that you are a part of. Don't look for other people to validate you, and don't ask for permission to make a change or be great."

A MERICA ON TECH's mission is to decrease the economic and racial wealth gap in underrepresented communities by preparing the next generation of technology leaders. America on Tech (AOT) develops aspects of its programs and services in collaboration with the young people served by the organization, creating a model that engages young people as thought participants and advisors who share insight on the support they need most. The AOT program model is a multi-layered pathway that creates opportunities for students to engage in technology skills-building and professional opportunities from high school to college and/or career.



Jadayah Spencer

Executive Director
International Youth
Leadership Institute

JADAYAH (pronounced /JAH-DAY-AH/) Spencer was born and raised in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. A fast learner, Jadayah skipped two elementary school grades and completed high school at fifteen. School was not her only passion. Jadayah has also had a love of travel. For as long as she can remember, she yearned to travel. However, she thought that she would need to have a lot of money for that to be possible. One summer, she missed seeing her cousins who typically visited for a month. Much to her surprise, she saw postings on social media with pictures of them in front of the pyramids of Giza in Egypt. She asked them how they managed to do that, and that is when she learned about the International Youth Leadership Institute (IYLI). After visiting an open house, she joined the program. Thus began Jadayah's wonderful journey with IYLI.

Unveiling Untapped Capabilities

BEFORE COLLEGE, JADAYAH received a scholarship to travel to Tanzania – an experience that changed her outlook on her own life and work: “We should all get to experience something like this,” she says. “When you’re in a place where you didn’t even imagine you could possibly be, it’s like if I’m capable of doing this, then what am I not capable of?” Jadayah continues “In Islam, we have a saying, you want for your brothers what you want for yourself.” In that spirit, she seeks to help others from her community to have experiences similar to hers. Her desire to serve her community has always shaped Jadayah’s life and how she works.

Jadayah celebrates her identity but also acknowledges the challenges she faces in a world where “being a person of color is often to be marginalized, to be a minority, to be the only person in the room who looks like you.” She draws her strength by reminding herself of her roots-- “When I remember where I come from, I remember that it is an asset even though sometimes there are moments that might seem otherwise... At the end of the day, it’s doesn’t matter what someone else might think.” Embracing every aspect of our identity is an asset because we can bring our multiple perspectives to the table. We can lend the unique combination of knowledge and experience that makes us who we are to any discussion. It guides good decisions, strategies, and policies when we hear from the perspectives of people from all walks of life.

Redefining Leadership Norms

AS A YOUNG WOMAN in a leadership position, people often question her ideas and approaches. She is often the youngest person in a room, as well as the only (or one of few) women of color. At those times, she recalls the warn-

ing of her predecessor, IYLI’s Co-Founder, Dr. Michael Webb (a much older male). When he invited her to take over leading the organization after graduation, he said: “Sometimes you’ll say the same exact thing that I would say, but it will just be received differently and negatively because you’re younger and a woman.”

Jadayah’s challenge to funders is: “Try new things, take risks, especially when it comes to organizations led by people of color.” She highlights three advantages that leaders of color have in working with young people: trust, understanding, and depth of experience. More funders need to acknowledge the value of this perspective and the leaders’ proximity to the communities they serve. Jadayah also urges foundations to engage those with lived experience in the decision-making process and “Actually listen... And if you’re going to ask somebody for their expertise, pay them for their time.”

Having taken leadership of the organization at the age of 20, Jadayah has served IYLI as a volunteer, a group leader, and a board member, and was a fellow participating in the program in 2010. Jadayah notes: “It is an honor to be one of the many people in this space trying to make things better in the community, even when it’d be very easy to sit down and do nothing because you are pushing upstream or progress isn’t being made at the pace you want.” She recognizes that change can take a long time but is hopeful because it does happen. To make the point, she quotes Martin Luther King, Jr.: “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” And Jadayah is ready to rise to the challenge because, in her words: “In Brooklyn, we don’t back down from a challenge.”

THE MISSION OF the International Youth Leadership Institute (IYLI) is to nurture a new generation of visionary leaders from the African Diaspora who, inspired by their rich African heritage, are committed to leaving a legacy in the world. IYLI prepares middle and high school students to become effective advocates for their communities by providing service-learning and cross-cultural experiences. Middle school students explore their own and other cultures and learn about the diversity of New York City. In the high school leadership and service-learning program, students discuss local, national, and international issues, and identify ways that they can become involved. For 33 years, IYLI has provided opportunities for youth of color in New York City to travel to countries in the African diaspora.



Kelly Vilar

Chief Executive Officer
Staten Island Urban Center

KELLY VILAR is a native New Yorker and proud to call Harlem her hometown. She was born and raised at a time when the cry for social justice was at its peak. Surrounded by community organizers, civil rights activists and artists whose goal was to make their communities better, she participated at age fourteen in the Summer Youth Employment Program in New York City. “My first job was to work with a Crisis Intervention Center in Harlem. We did youth development through youth involvement, where we worked directly with the executive director...I fell in love with working with young people, even though I was a young person myself. I’ve now done that for most of my life’.

Centering Youth Voice

KELLY EVENTUALLY MOVED to Staten Island. After a beloved recreation center was destroyed and ultimately demolished as a result of neglect and damage from storms, Kelly and members of her community banded together to fill the gap. Kelly felt it was vital that people had access to resources and information that would allow them to find their own solutions to issues affecting their communities. This eventually led to her founding the Staten Island Urban Center.

Here, too, the most important element of Kelly’s plan was to create programs that aided youth development through youth involvement. Young people have always been the heart of the Staten Island Center: “They’re the forefront of our staff. Most of my staff are young people.” For Kelly, youth input is crucial in forging effective programming, and in her organization, young people and their voices will always be front and center.

Kelly’s journey has not been without challenges. As an LGBTQ woman of color, Kelly has had to work harder than her white counterparts in order to be taken seriously. Despite those obstacles, she’s proud that she is able to represent her community, and inspire others to succeed. “I am one of the few persons of color –and specifically Afro Latinas– working on Staten Island as the head of a nonprofit organization... It’s important for young people to see that because they need to know what’s possible, and they need to know that they can be leaders as well.”

Running an organization in the borough of Staten Island is a challenge in itself, because of its status as “the forgotten borough.” Kelly seeks to make sure that the Staten Island families and particularly their children in need —the majority of which being Black and Brown— are remembered.

Investing in Infrastructure

DESPITE THE CHALLENGES, the Center under Kelly’s leadership has proved a vital resource for the Staten Island community. What would she like funders to know about supporting effective BIPOC-led organizations? Kelly stresses the importance of strengthening and investing in infrastructure – health insurance, payroll and management programs to name a few. She says, “It’s the stuff in the background that most people don’t see, but it is the stuff that makes organizations strong.” Kelly recognizes that for many first-time founders with backgrounds and ethnicity like hers, there is no road map or, as she puts it “generational exchange” on how to lead this type of work. Her solution is to encourage new leaders to learn and work together.

Above all, Kelly is passionate about centering the experiences of the young people she serves and with whom she works. Again, her refrain is: “It’s youth development through youth involvement. That’s the soul of my philosophy about working with young people.”

THE MISSION OF the Staten Island Urban Center is to inspire and educate multi-generational and multi-ethnic stakeholders as they build their own healthy neighborhoods. The Center helps to elevate their voices through community activism, social justice arts, publications and youth development. Youth become citizen journalists producing written work and photography for publication. Others become art activists using various media to produce solution-oriented messaging on issues affecting Staten Islanders.

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ERICA HAMILTON is the CEO & Founder of The Memo I Never Got (MING), a strategic advisory firm that provides consulting, executive coaching, and inclusive facilitation services for senior leaders committed to building cultures, programs, policies, and initiatives that drive social impact while centering diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in their work.

Erica is a “tri-sector” leader who has served as a Senior Executive, Leadership and DEIB Strategist, Grantmaker, and Strategic Advisor in the private, academic, and philanthropic sectors. Erica has led cross-functional teams in C-level and senior leadership roles throughout her career in the US and abroad. Erica’s professional journey, to date, has included tenures at Goldman Sachs, Prep for Prep, Sponsors for Educational Opportunity, Citigroup, City Year, the Institute for Nonprofit Practice, and iMentor. And her work in the talent development space has included roles as a Program Designer and Lead Facilitator for the Black Leadership Institute, NYU Executive Leadership Summits & Senior Leader Fellowships, and the Pinkerton Foundation Advanced Leadership Network (PALN).

Erica is the Co-Founder of the Women’s Leadership Council (WLC) and the Black Leadership Institute. Erica has also served on the University of Pennsylvania and New York University faculty. Erica currently serves on the Advisory Committee for Women of Color in Fundraising & Philanthropy and as a Board Member for Arbor Rising—a grantmaking and capacity building organization that invests in early-stage nonprofit organizations helping individuals transition out of poverty.

Erica received her MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and her MPA from NYU Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, and her BA from Harvard University.

DANIELLE PULLIAM

Senior Program Officer and PALN Co-Facilitator

AS A SENIOR Program Officer at The Pinkerton Foundation, Danielle Pulliam manages grants focused on literacy, sports, and arts programs for youth. She also serves as a thought partner for the foundation’s Racial Equity Initiative to support BIPOC leaders. Danielle joined The Pinkerton Foundation as a Program Officer in 2013 and serves on the national board of Grantmakers for Education. Danielle is also an active member of Philanthropy New York’s Youth and Education Funders Working Group.

Before joining Pinkerton, Danielle worked at the New York City Department of Education as the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Planning in the Office of Adult and Continuing Education. She is a professionally trained consultant with fifteen years of experience in organizational development and has worked in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. Danielle has worked at Accenture, Carver Federal Savings Bank and a range of nonprofit organizations, including the United Way of New York City, Public/Private Ventures and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). Danielle has been recognized as a 2021 Rockwood Equity in Philanthropy Fellow.

Danielle earned a Master of Public Administration degree from the City University of New York’s Baruch School of Public Affairs through the National Urban Fellows Program and a B.A. from Brown University.

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THIS REPORT WAS the result of a collaborative effort that included several individuals who dedicated their time and energy to support the project. The authors developed the interview questions, while two high school interns researched each leader's organization and background before conducting the interviews. The efforts of all the contributors were evident throughout the project. We are grateful for their valuable contributions.

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