



Commonwealth Seminar
Opening the Doors of Government to Everyone
for 20 Years

IN THE ROOM & AT THE TABLE 2023

Kicking off our Milestone 20th Anniversary

**CELEBRATING OUR
“20 FOR 20 HONOREES”**

Honoring some of our most distinguished alumni

**9 NOV, 2023 | 5:30 - 7:30 PM
EASTERN BANK - 265 FRANKLIN ST., BOSTON MA**

November 9, 2023



Good evening, everyone!

On behalf of our entire Commonwealth Seminar Family, welcome to “In the Room & At The Table 2023”! We are incredibly grateful that you have chosen to join us for our signature, annual event this year as we kick off our milestone Twentieth Anniversary Celebration.

Since 2003, over 1,700 Seminar alumni, from throughout Massachusetts and the world, have gained the skills, mindset, and broad networks to help them access and influence decision-makers at all levels of government for the betterment of their communities.

With over 90% of our 1,700+ graduates from communities-of-color, 71% either immigrants or New Americans, and 67% women, Seminar grads can be found leading and working at the highest levels of government, businesses, and their communities.

Tonight, we honor some of these very Seminar Family members who have distinguished themselves in their respective careers and communities. Clearly, this list is not exhaustive or complete, but it gives a wonderful snapshot of just some of the remarkable work our Seminar Family is doing around the globe.

As we recognize and celebrate our past and present, we’re also proud to highlight some of our newest initiatives. These include our *Next Gen* program for high school and college-age students, our *Beyond English Initiative* for communities whose primary language is not English, and our work to create a new *Race and Gender Equity & Leadership Institute* with our partners at the Boston Women’s Fund and Women’s Fund of Western MA.

We are fortunate and honored to have two icons of diversity, equity, inclusion, Charlotte Golar Richie and Colette Phillips, as our event Co-Chairs. We are also thrilled to welcome the Boston Globe’s Shirley Leung - one of the most respected and well-known journalists in the nation - as our Mistress of Ceremonies. Each of these three dynamic women are synonymous with social justice and fairness, and we are grateful for their unwavering commitment to the Seminar through the years.

The Seminar has truly been a community-wide effort for the last two decades. We have thrived all these years because of our selfless Seminar Advisory Board who help guide the Seminar and our committed faculty who selflessly take time out of their busy schedules to teach and engage with our grads. In addition, our countless community partners have been invaluable collaborators, and our donors and supporters continue to make our program affordable to all.

Thank you again for joining us today. We hope you enjoy our Twentieth Anniversary Kickoff Celebration, and we look forward to working with you for our next twenty years, and beyond!

Leverett Wing – Commonwealth Seminar Executive Director



Commonwealth Seminar

Opening the Doors of Government to Everyone

HISTORY OF THE SEMINAR:

The Commonwealth Seminar was founded twenty years ago in 2003, by Joel Barrera and State Senator Jarrett Barrios, with a clear goal... To "Open the Doors of Government to Everyone".

As we celebrate our 20th Anniversary, we are proud that the Seminar has graduated over 1,700 alumni, and built a network of over 4,500 diverse leaders from around the globe and across boundaries of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and political affiliation...

Putting Our Alumni "In the Room" & "At the Table"

Demystifying the Process:

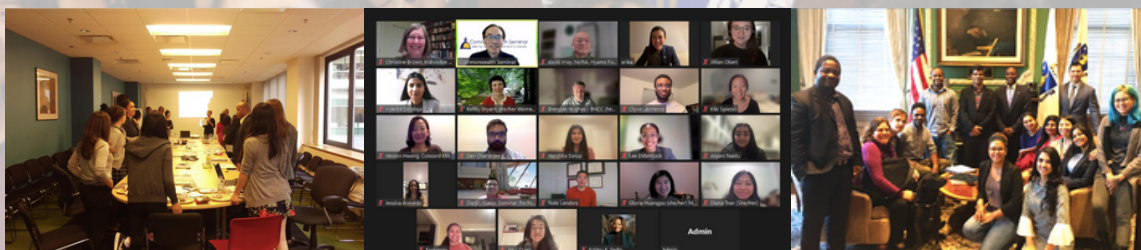
- The Legislative Process
- The Budgetary Process
- Working with the Press/Media
- Lobbying & Advocacy
- Working with Government Agencies
- Organizing & Mobilizing their Communities
- Meeting and Working with Legislators and their staff

OUR GRADS:

- 1,700+ Seminar Alumni
- 71% New Americans or 1st Gen.
- 67% Women
- 39% Black/African American
- 30% Latinx
- 21% Asian-American Pacific Islander

From...

- 600+ Community Orgs
- 125+ Cities & Towns
- 32% Boston based
- 23 Countries



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City Councilor Nina Liang, Quincy
Kathy Abbott – Boston Harbor Now
Carole Charnow – Boston Children’s Museum
Liz Cheng – GBH

STITCHES



MISTRESS OF CEREMONIES



Shirley Leung

Shirley Leung is an award-winning columnist at the Boston Globe, who has written on everything from business to gender issues in the workplace. She is host of a new Globe Opinion podcast "[Say More](#)." Listen on [Apple](#), [Spotify](#), and [globe.com/saymore](#). Shirley is also a contributor to GBH's "Boston Public Radio," and has served as the Globe's business editor and interim editorial page editor. Prior to the *Globe*, Shirley was a reporter at *The Wall Street Journal*. A graduate of Princeton University, Shirley started her career at *The Baltimore Sun*.

EVENT CO-CHAIRS



Colette Phillips

page 29



Charlotte Golar Richie

page 30

"20 FOR 20 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI HONOREE"

Carmen Arce	11
Marcony Almeida-Barros	11
Karen Bunch	12
Linda Champion	12
Stephen Chan	13
Eduardo Crespo	13
Norman Eng	14
Stephanie Everett	14
Deeqo Jibril	15
Jose F. Masso	15
Sherina McKinley	16
Christian Merfeld	16
Alankrita Narang	17
Winston Pierre	17
Barry Reaves	18
Vanessa Calderon-Rosado	18
Ian So	19
Carole Copeland Thomas	19
Hua Wang	20
Gary Yu	20

"20 FOR 20 DISTINGUISHED ELECTED ALUMNI HONOREE"

Councilor Amy Green	21
Grace Keeney	21
Councilor Stephanie Martins	22
Councilor Julia Mejia	22
State Rep. Brandy Fluker Oakley	23
Councilor Samantha Perlman	23
Yolanda Thomas	24

“FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR HONOREES”

Joel Barrera	26
Jarrett Barrios	26
Emily Torres-Cullinane	27
Charles Glick	27
Angus McQuilken	28
Deval Patrick	28
Colette Phillips	29
Mealea Chan-Polcari	29
Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley	30
Charlotte Golar Richie	30
Robert Travaglini	31
Mayor Michelle Wu	31
Jacquetta Van Zandt	32

“EMERGING ALUMNI HONOREES”

Lesley Chuang	33
Diego Huezco	33
Rodline Louijeune	34
Carlos Prudencio	34
Adriana Taylor	35
Jay Wong	35
Anita Yip	36

“INSPIRATIONAL ALUMNI HONOREES”

Cyndi Weekes Bradley	37
Fabienne Eliacin	37
Raffi Freedman-Gurspan	38
Joel Mora	38
Natalie Ornell	39
Raquel Quezada	39
Gabrielle Rene	40

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Carmen Arce

Carmen Arce is the COO at The Partnership, a Boston based organization focused on attracting, developing, and retaining professionals of color in the region. Prior to joining The Partnership, Carmen served as Director of Personnel and Administration in the office of Governor Deval Patrick.

She currently serves on the board of Buckingham Browne and Nichols School, WBUR, the leadership board of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, and the newly created Governor's Council on Latino Empowerment. She also served on the boards of Emerge MA, the MA Commission on the Status of Women, MassVote, and the Chelsea Collaborative.

In 2022, Tufts University recognized Carmen with a 2021 Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award. The Boston Business Journal named Carmen as one of its 2018 40 Under 40 honorees. Originally from Mexico, Carmen graduated with a LL.B from Universidad Panamericana Law School in Guadalajara Mexico, a LL.M from Suffolk University Law School and a MALD degree from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.



**Marcony
Almeida-Barros**

Marcony Almeida Barros is the Deputy Chief of Staff for Access & Opportunity for Governor Maura T. Healey.

Prior to joining Governor Healey's senior team, he served as Director of Community Engagement for the Office of the Attorney General where he led the implementation of the first-of-its-kind community engagement division at an AG's Office in the country, bringing the office to receive an award from the Harvard Kennedy School as one of the top 10 innovations in American government. Marcony also served as Chief of Staff and Executive Director of the state's Office for Refugees and Immigrants.

His passion for public service brought him to run for local office, and he was elected in 2018 as the first Latino to serve on the Everett School Committee.

He is a graduate from Northeastern University with an MS in Corporate and Organizational Communications with a concentration in Leadership.

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Karen Bunch

A real estate and sales professional with over twenty years of real estate, sales, business development and marketing experience, Ms. Bunch is currently President and CEO of KLB Builders, Inc., a construction company that provides a wide range of real estate advisory services such as project management, general contract and leasing and sales brokerage.

Previously, she was a Real Estate Advisor for Associated Brokerage Group LLC [ABG], advising businesses at all stages of development.

Prior to her real estate career, Ms. Bunch worked in the office supply, telecommunications and food and beverage industries for international brands such as Staples, Kraft Foods, Sarah Lee and Hillshire Farms where her responsibilities included oversight of quality care, logistics, product development, manufacturing and sales.

She currently serves on the Board of Greater Grove Hall Main Streets, an organization that focuses on empowering existing and new businesses to thrive in the competitive Boston business community. There's been overlap with all her career trajectories which have created a unique skill of being a top tier relationship manager with actual experience in the development, sale and operations of commercial real estate and specifically food manufacturing. Ms. Bunch has exceptional ability in developing relationships and recruiting individuals for a common initiative.

Ms. Bunch attended Mt. Ida College in Newton, MA. She is also an avid golfer and is a member of the Real Estate Advisory Board of Urban Edge, Business Marketing Association and Leadership Golf Club.



Linda Champion

Linda Champion is a proud Commonwealth Seminar alum. Linda is Senior Counsel at Murphy Hesse Toomey & Lehane LLP where she serves as co-counsel to the firm's public retirement board practice and oversees the firm's extensive Chapter 32 litigation practice. Prior to retirement from public service, she served as District and Municipal Court Legal Counsel to the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office. There she managed Suffolk County community prosecutions, hired and supervised assistant district attorneys practicing in specialty, district and municipal courts, and office personnel. For ten years, Ms. Champion served as Assistant General Counsel to the Massachusetts' Workers Compensation Trust Fund litigating under M.G.L Ch. 152, s. 65 and 37 including subrogation claims, mediation, settlement negotiations, and criminal and civil matters involving the fund. Ms. Champion began her public service career as an Assistant District Attorney with the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office. In addition to practicing law, Ms. Champion is an adjunct professor at New England Law | Boston and her professional affiliations

include Eastern Region Commissioner (Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and Girls); Board Secretary (Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts); Member (Town of Milton's Equity and Justice for All Committee); and Board Member (Boston Arts Academy). From 2021-2023, Commissioner (Boston Municipal Lobbying and Compliance Commission). Linda is a graduate of Suffolk University and Suffolk University Law School; and, the proud Mom to Tae, a University of Maryland Terrapin.

Twitter: @attychamp; Instagram: iamlindachampion

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Stephen Chan

Stephen Chan is Mayor Wu's Senior Advisor for Partnerships. He will serve as a key driver of the Mayor's agenda by developing and deepening ties to area institutions and other external stakeholders, including philanthropic foundations and higher education, to advance key initiatives to support youth and schools, climate leadership, and the equitable growth of Boston.

Chan brings more than 15 years of leadership experience across higher education, philanthropic, nonprofit, and public institutions in Boston. Most recently, he served as Chief of Staff to the President at Northeastern University, helping to advance the university's mission of providing personalized, experiential education for more than 40,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional students across the U.S., U.K., and Canada. Before Northeastern, Chan served as Vice President for Strategy and Operations at the Boston Foundation where he led strategic planning, operations, data and research, and public education programs.

Chan's approach to systems transformation and problem-solving is informed by his prior experience advancing public-private partnerships at the City of Boston. As an Advisor to Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Stephen brought together public and private stakeholders to launch the Mayor's Office of Food Initiatives (now the Office of Food Justice) and coordinated the City of Boston's engagement with Success Boston, a public-private initiative to dramatically boost the number of Boston Public Schools' graduates who complete their post-secondary degrees.

Chan's deep understanding of Boston's unrivaled ecosystem of civic institutions is also informed by his work as a board advisor and trustee. He currently serves on the boards of the Massachusetts LGBT Chamber of Commerce and the Asian Community Fund. His previous service includes serving as a trustee of Bunker Hill Community College and as a board member of Philanthropy Massachusetts.

Chan received his MBA from Harvard Business School, MPA from Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and BA in Public Policy from Stanford University. He lives in the South End with his husband and two children.



Eduardo Crespo

Eduardo Crespo, a native of Ecuador, is the founder and CEO of Hispanic Market Solution, a Lawrence/Boston-based business enterprise that specializes in helping companies Understand, Reach, and Service ("URS" methodology) the US Hispanic and Latin American markets. This framework has catapulted him to the national spotlight and is a sought-after speaker at major national and international conferences.

This year, he was honored and received the 2023 Massachusetts Minority Business Award by the United States Small Business Administration. In August 2023, a full-page article was published by the prestigious Boston Business Journal where he was called a "Preacher for Latino businesses."

In October 2023, Eduardo wrote "The Massachusetts Hispanic Business Opportunity" article which was published by prominent organizations such as the Associated Industries of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Bankers Association, US Small Business

Administration, Cooperative Credit Union Association, and other entities.

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Norman Eng

Chinese Freemasons Chee Kong Tong and the Ng Family Benevolent Association of Boston. Norm has a passion for the game of volleyball as well, coaching his son's juniors U14 volleyball team at Boston United Volleyball Club; and coaching with Boston Freemasons 9 Man Volleyball Club in the summer. Norm, his wife Angela, son Izaac, daughter Charlotte, and dog Bernie reside in the Town of Milton.

Norm has been with the United States Small Business Administration since July 2013. In his role as Public Affairs Specialist, he is responsible for managing signature events such as National Small Business Week Awards; and coordinating internal and external communications, including writing success stories, producing Microsoft Dynamics communications, coordinating content for the district office website and social media management. Eng received a bachelor's degree in business communications from Bentley University and an MBA from Sawyer Business School, Suffolk University. In recent years, Norm answered a call to serve as the Region 1 (New England) Co-Lead for the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (WHIAANHPI) Regional Network -- where he built stronger relationships between the federal government and AANHPI communities by coordinating outreach efforts and connecting community stakeholders with federal resources. Eng is also active in the Boston Chinatown community where he served as an officer, Secretary for both the Boston



Stephanie Everett

Department (BPD) personnel both sworn and civilian, and reviewing BPD's existing and proposed policies and procedures.

For nearly a decade, Stephanie operated a solo law firm with a focus on criminal defense and real estate transactions. Before starting her law firm, Stephanie served as the Chief of Staff to the Department of Transitional Assistance under Governor Deval Patrick's Administration. She has additionally served as the Deputy Chief of Staff to a Massachusetts State Senator and as a Public Safety Manager at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

Stephanie has served on various boards and Commissions including Emerge Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, the Boston Employment Commission and the Boston Municipal Lobbying Commission.

Stephanie Everett serves as the Register of Probate for Suffolk County - the first Black woman to hold the position. For over two decades, she has devoted both her professional career and volunteer efforts to serving in public service to ensure resources are equitably available and equally accessible to all. Stephanie's deep commitment to the betterment of the community is personal to her. As a child, the community uplifted Stephanie as she navigated a troubled home life and again when Stephanie became a teen mother. Drawing from the strength of her community, Stephanie was able to persevere through homelessness and break societal expectations of her young family. On the journey to stability, she was also able to give back and uplift her community.

Before becoming Register, Stephanie served as the inaugural Executive Director of the Office of Police Accountability and Transparency (OPAT) for the City of Boston. Her responsibilities included overseeing complaints filed against the Boston Police

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Deeqa Jibril

Hailing originally from Somalia, Deeqa Jibril is an entrepreneur, humanitarian, and ardent activist of social justice. She has worked with the ABCD Housing department as a case coordinator, helping countless Immigrants to understand and obtain affordable housing. Her social activism includes contributing to Senator Jarrett Barrios', Governor Deval Patrick 's, and Senator Elizabeth Warren's campaigns. Deeqa was chosen by the Massachusetts Commissioner on the Status of Women as one of their "Unsung Heroes." Over the last four years, Deeqa's work has concentrated on providing support for Somali youth and young adults, and families struggling with symptoms related to loss, trauma, and resettlement challenges.

Ms. Jibril is the founder of the Somali Community and Cultural Association (SCCA) in Boston with a vision to support and elevate the role of Boston's Somali community in the political, social, and economic life of the city. She is also the founder of the African Mall in Roxbury. In 2017, she ran for Boston City Council and narrowly missed becoming the City Councilor for District 7.

Currently, Ms. Jibril works at the Mayor's Office of Economic Development as a Neighborhood Business Manager.

Ms. Jibril has also supported initiatives in Somalia. She organized a group of Somali Diaspora in Boston to build an elementary school in Puntland, Somalia. Recently, she visited Puntland to facilitate a water management project. Her activities are assisted by Project Cure that is donating medical supplies to Puntland Hospital. She met the project staff when speaking at the at the Harvard Global Health Summit in May. Throughout all her activities, Deeqa is deeply committed to building bridges between the African diaspora and African communities for a mutually beneficial collaboration and dialogue.



Jose F. Masso

José F. Massó is the Chief of Human Services for the City of Boston, serving as a member of Mayor Michelle Wu's cabinet. In that role, Chief Massó oversees a diverse portfolio of city departments including the Boston Public Library, Boston Centers for Youth & Families, the Age Strong Commission, Office of Veterans' Services, Office of Returning Citizens, and the Office of Youth Engagement & Advancement.

A nonprofit leader, community organizer, and lifelong resident of Boston, Chief Massó has 25 years of experience in building and leading large, complex mission-driven organizations, including United South End Settlements (USES), YMCA of Greater Boston, Boston Public Health Commission, and Urban Edge.

Massó resides in Hyde Park with his wife and two children. He enjoys cycling, swimming, and table tennis.

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Sherina McKinley

Sherina (She/Her) is an innovative problem solver, educator, coach, and encourager in Boston, MA. Her work is fueled by her desire to see your wildest dream come true, especially for those that society has counted out. Her work has been rooted in racial & economic justice and over the last decade, Sherina has used her expertise in finance, strategy, and operations to support black & brown entrepreneurs big and small across the US. Her office is always the sanctuary where entrepreneurs can unload the stresses of life, get recharged, and shift their focus.

With Sherina's expertise & guidance in finance, strategy, and operations these entrepreneurs are creating long-lasting businesses, creating local jobs, accessing capital, and reviving communities. Currently, she serves as the Co-CEO at Uptima Entrepreneur Cooperative which is a national entrepreneurship school. In addition to Uptima, she serves on the loan committees of a few national social impact lending organizations. She volunteers as a success coach for a program specifically for Black

women entrepreneurs at Babson College (BWEL). She has served on the board of Dorchester Bay Economic Development Cooperation for 10 years and led the economic development committee. She has also served on strategic planning communities for prominent development projects through the Boston Planning & Development Agency. She holds a B.A. in both Public Relations/Marketing Communications and Managerial Finance from Simmons College in Boston, MA.



Christian Merfeld

Christian Merfeld serves as the Director of Communications and Public Relations at Boston Harbor Now, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting equitable access and climate resilience of Boston Harbor. His role involves strategic communications, marketing, and fostering partnerships across various sectors.

Christian is a key figure in community-focused waterfront programs like New Year's Eve on the Waterfront, Eastie Week, and Community Cruises which draws thousands of Boston residents each year to Boston Harbor. Currently, he is leading an equity study of the public waterfront using mobility data stemming from his passion for championing inclusive representation in public spaces.

As the child of immigrants and refugees from Cambodia, his experiences shaped his desire to build connections and communities. Christian mentors young professionals and shares insights into the communications and startup industry. With his

husband, he co-founded a successful small business, 2 Dogs Treats, in Dorchester, MA where they live with their 3 dogs and 2 cats.

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Alankrita Narang

Alankrita is the Chief Financial and Administrative Officer of Boston Harbor Now. She has been a part of the team since it was founded in 2014. She plays a key role in strategizing and implementing effective initiatives and business practices to improve the impact of the organization and advance its mission in Greater Boston. She manages finance, HR and IT, oversees administrative support, monitors strategic priorities with the President and CEO, and implements systems and processes supporting organizational sustainability and growth.

Prior to joining Boston Harbor Now, Alankrita has experience managing strategy and business development for startups in the USA, Chile and India. With her passion for social entrepreneurship and positive change-making, Alankrita is also part of the co-founding team for Circle of Hope, a women's giving circle, with the American India Foundation's New England Chapter and serves on the BUILD Boston Rising Leaders and Babson Alumni Advisory Boards.

In her spare time, she enjoys art and calligraphy, along with traveling and experiencing new cultures.

Alankrita holds a MS Project Management, MS in Management in Entrepreneurial Leadership from F.W. Olin Graduate School of Business, Babson College and Bachelors in Economics from Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi, India.



Winston Pierre

Winston Pierre sits on several advisory boards, including the Commonwealth Seminar, ERG Leadership Alliance. He also co-chairs the Massachusetts Department of Public Health – Health and Disability Partnership.

He has recently completed a Master's Degree in City Planning at Boston University. Winston graduated from the University of Massachusetts Boston with a B.A. in Political Science and a minor in Psychology. He completed the Partnership Inc. associate program in 2018, a year-long leadership development forum taught by some of the leading experts in the field of diversity and social-emotional intelligence.

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Barry Reaves

Reaves brings over twelve years of experience in diversity and equity management, including employee relations, organizational design, training, and development, and strategic communications. He serves as the Boston Planning & Development Agency's (BPDA) first ever Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. There, he is responsible for the development and oversight of the BPDA's racial equity and diversity priorities, and works to establish collaborative partnerships with internal and external stakeholders and fosters a more inclusive, equitable, welcoming, supportive, and diverse agency.

Reaves previously served as the Assistant Director of Investigations and Training for the City of Boston, and has managed the Discrimination Complaints Program for the United States Naval Air Systems Command. He has served in various roles for the U.S. Army, including as an Equal Opportunity Advisor. He is a veteran of the U.S. Army, serving on Active Duty for 18 years and a deep background in diverse leadership development, diversity

and inclusion programming, analytics, and effectiveness. He is a graduate of the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute.



Vanessa Calderon-Rosado

Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, Ph.D., is the CEO of IBA (Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción), a Boston-based community-building nonprofit that empowers individuals through the creation of high-quality affordable housing, education, residential services, and arts programming.

Throughout Dr. Calderón-Rosado's 20-year tenure, IBA has become the largest Latino-led nonprofit in Greater Boston. Dr. Calderón-Rosado has served as an advisor to Boston Police Department, Boston Public Health Commission, and most recently, the Healey-Driscoll Transition Committee focused on Housing. She serves on the Board of Directors of Barr Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, the Boston Foundation, Franklin Square House Foundation, MACDC, and Yawkey Foundation, and on the Eastern Bank Advisory Board. In 2020, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce honored her with a Pinnacle Award, which recognizes female professionals for outstanding achievements and leadership.

She received her doctorate in Public Policy from the University of Massachusetts – Boston, and an Honoris Causa Doctorate from Cambridge College.

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Ian So

Upon graduation from Babson College, Ian gained experience in the entrepreneurship world working at several startups. In 2012, eager to apply his entrepreneurial studies to real life, he bought a food truck on eBay for \$19,000 and launched his food business, Chicken & Rice Guys. From that initial investment, his business grew into an annual multi-million dollar revenue company with 7 food trucks, 3 restaurants, a full service food truck commissary and a full-service catering/popups. In the first 4 years of business, Chicken & Rice Guys was the 9th fastest growing private company and the 206th fastest growing private company in the USA. Currently, Chicken & Rice Guys continues to grow, and operates in multiple states with a pop-up in Houston and plans to expand to neighboring New England states.

In addition to being a business leader, Ian values being a community leader. He is extremely passionate about using his resources, knowledge, and experience to help others. In 2019, he founded the Chicken & Rice Guys foundation to expand on his company's mission to “Do Good With Food.” The foundation expands upon the charitable efforts of Chicken & Rice Guys, which has donated hundreds of thousand of dollars of in-kind donations and tens of thousands of pounds of food to various local Boston charities including homeless shelters, food pantries, and non-profits focused helping low-income and underprivileged communities.

Ian is also a board member/founder/advisor to various non-profits including the Culture Connection Project, Commonwealth Seminar, and the National Asian Chamber of Commerce of Entrepreneurship (ACE). At ACE, Ian helped found ACE NextGen, a group dedicated to cultivating millennial entrepreneurs. The organization started as a 100 person conference in Las Vegas in 2017 and continues to grow into a network of over a thousand millennial AAPI entrepreneurs across the United States.



Carole Copeland Thomas

For over three decades, Carole Copeland Thomas has been an unwavering force in the world of global diversity, equity, and inclusion. With a remarkable journey that began in 1987, she has risen to prominence as an acclaimed TEDx speaker, seasoned trainer, and a thought leader of international recognition. In the ever-evolving landscape of professional development, Carole has seamlessly transitioned to the virtual realm as a Virtual Presenter on platforms like Zoom. She remains at the forefront of emerging trends, keeping a vigilant eye on the concerns and challenges faced by working professionals. Her consultancy work with industry leaders reflects her dedication to staying ahead of the curve.

Carole's extensive career, spanning an impressive 36 years, has been built on the bedrock of meaningful relationships and impactful partnerships. She has collaborated with a diverse array of local, national, and international clients and sponsors, including corporate giants like State Street Corporation, Walmart, Amtrak, and Emirates Airlines. These partnerships speak to the trust and respect that organizations worldwide place in Carole's

expertise.

Carole Copeland Thomas is more than just a speaker, trainer, or thought leader; she is a transformative force shaping the future of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Her illustrious career and dedication to her cause have made her a beacon of hope and change in an ever-evolving world.

Website: www.conversationswithcarole1.com

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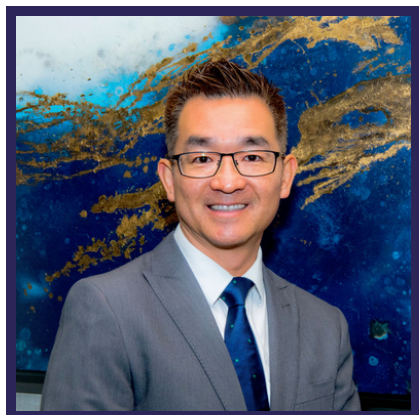


Hua Wang

Dr. Hua Wang’s professional experience has spanned academia, government, and industry. He is currently the Associate Head of Division of Systems Engineering at Boston University. He was a research scientist with United Technologies Research Center, a faculty member with Duke University, and a program manager with U.S. Army Research Office. He is a highly cited author with over 300 technical publications and books. He has served on various committees and editorial boards of professional societies and is a recipient of a number of prestigious professional awards.

He is a 2016 graduate of the Commonwealth Seminar. Dr. Wang is a well-respected and recognized community activist and leader involved with local, regional, and national organizations. He is the Chair of the National Board of Directors of United Chinese Americans (UCA), a prominent nonprofit national organization headquartered in Washington DC. He is the founding Co-Chair and immediate past President of New England Chinese

American Alliance (NECAA), and the President of Coalition for Anti-Racism and Equity (CARE) Action, Inc. He is also the Co-President of the Chinese American Association of Lexington (CAAL) and have served on the boards of Lexington Historical Society, Cary Memorial Library Foundation and Community Endowment of Lexington. He was a board member with Asian American Civic Association (AACA), Boston, the Chair of UCA Public Policy Committee, and Co-President of UCA-Massachusetts Chapter. He is recognized as one of the Boston’s 50 Most Influential Asian American Pacific Islanders in 2023.



Gary Yu

Gary Yu is a senior media personality and political activist. In 2016, he founded Boston International Media Consulting Inc. Four years later, he established Boston Asian Radio and TV, a station dedicated to the lives and interests of Asians. Gary Yu is a senior media personality. He also served as a producer and host of ATV , BNN TV, and Quincy Access Television (QATV), and a reporter for Sing Tao Daily, World Journal, and other publications.

In addition, he contributed substantially to the election campaigns of Boston Mayor Michele Wu and Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey. He is currently the President of New England Chinese American Alliance, Co-President of the Massachusetts Chapter of United Chinese Americans, and President of the Boston Chapter of the Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association. He also is currently Transition Team Member of State Auditor Diana Dizoglio and Suffolk County District Attorney Kevin Hayden.

In February 2023, He brought the community together to promote for unanimous approval Resolution in support of designating Lunar New Year as an official holiday in the City of Boston by the Boston City Council .In May 2023, He brought the community together to promote for the Governor of Massachusetts to sign the Proclamation designating May as AAPI Heritage Month in Massachusetts.

“DISTINGUISHED ELECTED ALUMNI”



**Councilor
Amy Green**

Amy is a successful 18-year business owner at Back-n-Touch Wellness Center providing outstanding patient-oriented services as an Orthopedic and Deep Tissue Massage Therapist.

Amy has also demonstrated an ability to develop innovative solutions and garner support to solve problems within city government as the Ward 1 Councilor for the City of Fitchburg.

She has proven aptness to be well organized, be able to think quickly, and possess creativity as the producer of “Weekly Wellness,” at Fitchburg Access Television.

Amy is dynamic, confident and approachable. She enjoys being engaging and light-hearted in all aspects of work and personal life.



Grace Keeney

Grace Keeney is passionate about helping others, while also making government more accessible to all. By day, she leads 50+ employees doing short term disability claims at Sun Life and by night she serves the community by being a Town Meeting Member and Finance Committee Member in Natick. She’s been vocal in advocating for hybrid Town Meeting to ensure more people can participate in local government.

A graduate of Bentley University, Grace has served as the Co-Chair of the United Way’s Emerging Leaders Board and Co-Chair of Sun Life’s women’s leadership group called BrightWomen. She has over 11 years experience in the insurance industry leading large teams, executing on strategic initiatives, and project management.

Her proudest accomplishment is raising two strong, determined and caring girls, with her supportive and loving husband, Matt.

“DISTINGUISHED ELECTED ALUMNI”



**Councilor
Stephanie Martins**

Stephanie Martins began her professional journey in customer service at the age of 15 and transitioned to financial services before pursuing a career in legal services and real estate, where she founded her own real estate business alongside her husband.

She holds a degree in Government from Harvard University Extension School, and actively engaged in community involvement during her academic years. She completed a graduate program focusing on housing affordability and interned at the State House. Stephanie's dedication to community service is evident through her mentorship, involvement in the Universal Church, and participation in civic engagement and educational activities.

She is also an active member of the Everett Kiwanis Club and serves on the Advisory Board for the Business Law Academy at Everett High School.

Stephanie's unwavering commitment to her constituents is reflected in her second term as City Councilor.



**Councilor
Julia Mejia**

Born in the Dominican Republic, Boston City Councilor At-Large, Julia Mejia arrived in the neighborhood of Dorchester when she was five years old. Raised by a single mother, who was undocumented for most of her childhood, she was forced at an early age to speak up on behalf of her mother and others who felt ignored by the very institutions that were supposed to serve them.

Driven by a lifelong pursuit of justice and equity, Councilor Mejia has created countless opportunities for others to step into their power and advocate for positive change as a community organizer. Following the 2019 election AND a historic two-month recount, Julia won her seat by a single vote and is now the first Afro-Latina to sit on the Boston City Council. Mejia is currently the Chair of the Committee on Education, the Committee on Government Accountability, Transparency, and Accessibility as well as the Committee on Labor, Workforce, and Economic Development."

Twitter/Instagram: [@juliaforboston](https://twitter.com/juliaforboston); Facebook: [Julia For Boston](https://www.facebook.com/juliaforboston)

“DISTINGUISHED ELECTED ALUMNI”



**State
Representative
Brandy Fluker
Oakley**

Brandy Fluker Oakley is wrapping up the first year of her second-term as State Representative of the 12th Suffolk District. She serves as the House Co-Chair of the Ellen Story Commission on Postpartum Depression, Vice-Chair of the Racial Equity, Civil Rights, and Inclusion Committee, and is a member of The Judiciary Committee, the Transportation Committee, and the Revenue Committee. Brandy also serves on the Women’s Caucus executive board as Treasurer, and is an engaged member of the MA Black and Latino Legislative Caucus.

Upon graduating from Boston Latin School, she attended Syracuse University and graduated with bachelor’s degrees in both social work and public policy. Brandy, a member of the Baltimore Teachers Union, taught third grade earning her Master’s in Education at The Johns Hopkins University before attending law school at Emory University. She became a public defender with the Committee for Public Counsel Services in the Boston Municipal and Chelsea District Courts. Brandy also has an extensive background in nonprofit leadership, corporate trainings, and best practices for management and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

She is the founder and president of Delighting in God Ministries (D.I.G.), principal at Butterfly Leadership, Inc., a faithful member of her church, member of the Dorchester YMCA, member of Junior League Boston, life member of the NAACP, a practicing attorney and member of both the Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association & the Women’s Bar Association, and an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. Brandy is also the only child of Rev. Brenda A. Fluker, Esq. and is fiercely protective of her mom.



**Councilor
Samantha Perlman**

Samantha Perlman made history as the youngest woman and first Jewish woman ever elected citywide to the Marlborough City Council at age 24 and first new candidate to top a Council race. She won re-election in 2021 as the top vote recipient in any city race and is a current candidate for Mayor.

A graduate of Emory University, Samantha previously worked in both civic education and a democracy nonprofit, where she specialized in youth voting. Through her community advocacy, Samantha helped secure passage of the 2018 Massachusetts civic education law. Samantha is a proud graduate of Emerge Massachusetts, the Commonwealth Seminar and the Institute for Nonprofit Practice’s Community Fellows Program. In 2020, she was named one of IGNITE National’s 30 under 30 for Womxn to Watch in Politics. In 2023, the Mass Municipal Association’s Women Elected Municipal Officials organization selected Samantha as the Second-Vice Chair.

Outside of her formal elected role, Samantha is a Public Service Scholar at Boston College Law School and is pursuing a dual degree at Tufts University in Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning.

“DISTINGUISHED ELECTED ALUMNI”



Yolanda Thomas is a Town Meeting member in Milton, MA. Yolanda Thomas is a Spring 2021 Seminar graduate.

Yolanda Thomas

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AND
LEVERETT WING**

Dr. George and Mrs. Diana King

Bunker Hill Community College

proudly supports the work of the Commonwealth Seminar in opening the doors of government to everyone.

We congratulate the Seminar's alums recognized with the "20 for 20" Distinguished Alumni Award. Thank you for your incredible contributions to the betterment of your communities.



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“FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR HONOREE”



Joel Barrera

Joel Barrera is a member of Governor Charlie Baker’s leadership team. He currently serves as the Governor’s Deputy Chief of Staff for Cabinet Relations. Joel was the Founder of the Commonwealth Seminar serving as its Executive Director until late 2015 where he left a ten year legacy of opening the doors of the State House to a whole generation of diverse leaders.

Joel also served as Deputy Director for the Metropolitan Area Planning Council from 2008 until 2015. He was instrumental in all of the agency’s accomplishments during that time including MAPC’s strategic planning process, the agency’s expansion into new fields such as public health and clean energy, and the expansion of its technical assistance to cities & towns.

Joel also staffed the MetroMayor’s Coalition for many years and saw its development into a vital forum and strong advocate for the cities and towns in the urban core. In addition, Joel conceived of the plan to open miles of trails along MWRA aqueducts in Metro West for recreational use by the public, and he successfully advocated to make it happen.

His previous experience includes six years as the Director of the MA Senate Post Audit & Oversight Committee where he focused on making State Government more accountable and responsive.

After graduating from Princeton University and Oxford University (Worcester College), Joel worked as a community organizer along the Texas/Mexico border, working to bring public infrastructure to underserved areas.



**Jarrett Tomás
Barrios**

Jarrett Tomás Barrios is the chief executive officer of the American Red Cross Los Angeles Region, a former politician and activist. Prior to this, he served as the CEO of the American Red Cross of Massachusetts. Barrios served as a member of both the Massachusetts House of Representatives and the Massachusetts Senate and became the first Latino and first openly gay man elected to the Massachusetts Senate. He subsequently served as president of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation and, later, of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD).

The son of a Cuban-American carpenter and a Cuban-American social worker in Tampa, Florida, Barrios moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts at the age of 17 to study at Harvard College after graduating from Jefferson High School in Tampa. After graduating in 1990 with high honors and working for the Boston City Council, he earned his law degree with honors from Georgetown University. Eisenhower Fellowships selected Jarrett Barrios as a USA Eisenhower Fellow in 2009.

“FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR HONOREE”



**Emily Torres-
Cullilane**

Emily Torres-Cullinane is a proud alumnus from the Commonwealth Seminar, class of 2010. She has nearly two decades of experience in municipal and federal government, community engagement and political strategic planning in Greater Boston. She cares deeply about the empowerment of people, particularly with the goals of amplifying diverse voices, building civic social infrastructure and increasing the capacity of decision makers to have stronger connections with the communities they represent. She is a proud first-generation Latina with Colombian roots and a lifelong resident of Massachusetts raising a young family in the Greater Boston area.

She currently serves as the Chief of the Community Engagement Division in the Executive Bureau of the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office (AGO). Prior to joining the AGO, Ms. Torres-Cullinane was the Director of Community Engagement at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council where she developed its engagement practice over the course of 12 years and was a founding member of the Massachusetts Municipal Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Coalition.

She is an Interaction Institute for Social Change certified facilitator and a graduate of YW Boston's LeadBoston Program and the Initiative for Diversity in Civic Leadership. Emily has served on the Steering Committee for the Mel King Institute for a decade and serves on the Town of Canton's Energy Advisory Committee as Vice Chair.



Charles Glick

Charles Glick is principal of Charles Group Consulting (CGC), a Boston based government and issues management firm he founded in October 2001. CGC specializes in getting the voices of disaffected groups heard in the Legislature, media, government agencies, and in the community.

Charles has spearheaded a number of successful legislative campaigns including, comprehensive reform of bilingual education; passage of the state's first genetic privacy law; passage of a requirement that employees receive treble damages for wage violations; the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, preservation of the prohibition on for-profit adoption; a change in law granting dental hygienist the right to practice in public health settings without the supervision of a dentist; passage of legislation updating and modernizing the statute pertaining to items exempt under debt collection; legislation requiring insurance companies to cover services to children on the autism spectrum; a change in law making parental leave in the Commonwealth gender neutral; and passage of legislation requiring Massachusetts to divest from foreign companies doing business with Iran. In addition, each year Charles helps secure millions of dollars in state funding for his many human service

clients via the annual state budget.

Prior to forming Charles Group Consulting, Charles served as the founding director of government affairs for the Jewish Community Relations Council of Boston. During his seven years with the JCRC, he successfully represented the government affairs needs of 8 regional communities in Massachusetts and a dozen social and human service agencies. Charles continues to represent the interests of the Jewish community through CGC.

In the fall of 2004, Charles served as the director of Jewish outreach in South Florida for John Kerry's presidential campaign and coordinator of all out-of-state volunteers in Jewish outreach for the 2008 Obama campaign in Florida. In 2006, he and a colleague formed the Jewish Political Action Committee of Massachusetts, the first political action committee in the country to focus and support the domestic policy agenda of the Jewish community.

He holds a master's degree in Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, a master's degree in Jewish Communal Service from Brandeis University and BA in Political Science from UCLA.

“FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR HONOREE”



Angus McQuilken

Angus McQuilken serves as Industry Relationship Executive for the life sciences sectors at McDermott Will & Emery, a mission-focused, global law firm that is a leader in supporting life sciences innovation. From 2008–2017, McQuilken served as Vice President for Communications & Marketing for the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center. McQuilken previously served as Vice President for Public Affairs for Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts, where he managed communications, governmental relations, and grassroots organizing. In 2004 McQuilken served as Deputy Communications Director for the Democratic National Convention Committee. From 1993–2003 McQuilken served as Chief of Staff to State Senator Cheryl Jacques, where he played a key role in the passage of dozens of major legislative initiatives, including the Massachusetts Gun Control Act of 1998. McQuilken is an adjunct lecturer at Lasell University in Newton, Massachusetts, where he teaches “Introduction to Public Relations” and “Effective Speaking”.

McQuilken holds a BA in Political Science from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and is a former member of the University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees. He was the recipient of the 2008 Distinguished Citizen Award from the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration.



Deval Patrick

Deval Patrick is a distinguished professor of practice and co-director of the Center for Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Hailing from Chicago's South Side, he attended Milton Academy, Harvard College, and Harvard Law School, with work experience in East and West Africa. His career includes roles as a staff attorney at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights during the Clinton administration, law firm partnerships, and senior executive positions in Fortune 500 companies.

Patrick made history as Massachusetts' first Black governor, serving from 2006 to 2015, focusing on areas like healthcare, education, clean energy, and biotechnology. His tenure saw Massachusetts excel in various domains, including student achievement and employment.

Afterward, he founded an impact investment fund and continues to support grassroots engagement efforts in progressive politics.

Patrick is a Rockefeller Fellow, an Aspen Institute Crown Fellow, and an author of two books, dividing his time between Cambridge and Western Massachusetts.

“FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR HONOREE”



Colette Phillips

tourism and hospitality sector.

Colette Phillips is the CEO and President of Colette Phillips Communications, Inc. She is a renowned figure in the fields of PR, innovation, and philanthropy, known for her influential work with public figures, world leaders, entrepreneurs, and leadership teams across diverse industries. Her impressive track record has earned her numerous accolades for her personal, philanthropic, and professional achievements.

Colette is dedicated to fostering inclusive workplaces and educating others on engaging with culturally diverse consumers. She pioneered multicultural marketing in New England and is admired for her ability to create cross-cultural business and social networks, exemplified by her "Get Konnected" initiative.

Colette is highly regarded as a trusted advisor and mentor by many Boston leaders. In 2020, the City of Boston selected her firm to lead the All Inclusive Boston Campaign, aimed at promoting a more diverse and inclusive narrative about the city, benefiting the

Colette is also the author of "21 Steps for Women to Win" and the creator of "Kaleidoscope," Boston's first multicultural resource directory. Her contributions have earned her a spot on Boston Magazine's list of the city's 100 Most Influential People, recognition from the American Jewish Committee of New England, and inclusion on prestigious lists such as the Boston Business Journal's Power50 and Boston Globe's "A-Lister." She is known as Boston's "social connector" and a prominent figure at important events.



Mealea Chan-Polcari

Mealea is a proud alumna of the Commonwealth Seminar class of spring 2017, an Advisory Council member, a scholarship sponsor for multiple years, and a sponsor for its membership for the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. Mealea has more than twenty-five years of professional experience across multiple industries, including in government, philanthropy, real estate, residential lending, and entrepreneurship. Mealea is the Founder and CEO of Invested, Vested LLC. Her company specializes in strategic planning, leadership, and executive coaching for 21st-century leaders. She invests in developing impactful leaders and empowering them to achieve and scale their success, power, wealth, impact, and influence for the greater good of our world. She is dedicating her life's work to closing the leadership and wealth gaps for women and minorities. One example of Mealea's impact and influence is based on her decision in 2017. Mealea was an angel investor and a major financial investor who took the highest risk by investing in a female entrepreneur. Due to Mealea's critical financial investments, this entrepreneur is a successful leader with power, wealth, impact, and influence in MA, New England, and the nation. Thanks to Mealea this entrepreneur

became 1 of 250 out of 89,000 real estate brokers nationwide to have annual sales of more than \$1.5 billion in 2022.

“FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR HONOREE”



**Congresswoman
Ayanna Pressley**

Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (MA-07) is an activist, a legislator, a survivor, and the first woman of color to be elected to Congress from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Throughout her career as a public servant, Congresswoman Pressley has fought to ensure that those closest to the pain are closest to the power – driving and informing policymaking.

Throughout her time in Congress, Congresswoman Pressley has been a champion for justice and healing: reproductive justice, justice for immigrants, consumer justice, justice for seniors, justice for workers, justice for survivors of sexual violence, justice for the formerly and currently incarcerated individuals, and healing for those who have experienced trauma.



**Charlotte Golar
Richie**

Charlotte Golar Richie is an experienced leader and administrator with a background in public service and political activism, and a deeply held commitment to civil rights. Throughout her career, Charlotte has held various positions in government, including as Boston's Chief of Housing and Director of the Department of Neighborhood Development, and as Commissioner for the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. With her election in 1994 to the State Legislature, where she chaired the Housing and Urban Development Committee, Charlotte was only the 7th Black woman to win a seat in the Massachusetts House of Representatives and the first to chair a committee during her first term.

Since an historic run for mayor of Boston in 2013 as the city's first African-American woman, Charlotte has continued to direct her efforts in support of women's leadership and her personal mission to get more women and women of color elected to public office: as a board member with the MA Women's Political Caucus, Interim Advisory Board Chair of UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, and as Co-Founder and Board Chair of

MAWOCC's Advisory Board. A graduate of Rutgers University (B.A.), Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism (M.S.) and Suffolk University's Sawyer School of Management (M.B.A.), Charlotte and her husband Winston are former U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers and proud parents of adult daughters, who are dedicated to effecting positive change in their own communities.

“FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR HONOREE”



Robert Travaglini

Robert E. Travaglini, founder of Travaglini, Scorzoni & Kiley, served as the President of the Massachusetts Senate from 2003 to 2007. During his tenure, he oversaw the passage of significant legislation, including the landmark 2007 healthcare reform bill and stem cell research and life sciences legislation.

Robert also held a position in the Massachusetts State Senate from 1993 to 2007 and served on the Boston City Council from 1984 to 1993.

A graduate of Boston State College, he is a prominent figure in public affairs and government relations, representing high-profile corporate and non-profit clients before Massachusetts state and local governments.



Mayor Michelle Wu

Michelle Wu is the Mayor of Boston and a passionate advocate for building community and addressing complex challenges. She is the daughter of immigrants, a mother of two boys in Boston Public Schools, and a commuter on the MBTA.

As the first Asian-American woman on the Boston City Council, she has been a strong voice for accessibility, transparency, and community engagement. During her time on the City Council, she championed initiatives like Paid Parental Leave and Healthcare Equity ordinances, promoting gender identity non-discrimination.

She also created Boston's Communications Access ordinance to ensure translation, interpretation, and assistive technology for city services.

Wu's diverse background includes work as a restaurant owner, legal services attorney, and guardian for her younger sister.

She is a Harvard graduate, fluent in Mandarin and Spanish, and resides in Roslindale with her family.

As Mayor, she's committed to delivering systemic change and making Boston an inclusive city for all.

“FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR HONOREE”



**Jacquetta Van
Zandt**

Jacquetta Van Zandt, Vice President of Engagement at The Partnership, Inc., is an accomplished political strategist with a focus on public policy and diversity initiatives. She gained experience on Capitol Hill and in various political campaigns before returning to Massachusetts to advocate for equal opportunities for women of color and address crucial issues such as pay equity, financial literacy, socioeconomic development, women's empowerment, and legislative diversification. She played a pivotal role in the campaign of Framingham's first popularly elected woman of color as Mayor.

Alongside Lori Lennon, she hosts the popular "Politics and Prosecco" zoom-cast/podcast, discussing current events and their impact on everyday life.

Van Zandt also serves on the board of directors for the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts.

A Boston native and Mount Ida College graduate, she currently resides in Quincy, MA.

CONGRATULATIONS

Commonwealth Seminar for
20 incredible years of lighting the
way for our youth in government.

and to our colleagues,
Alankrita Narang & Christian Merfeld
on your recognition!



“EMERGING ALUMNI HONOREE”



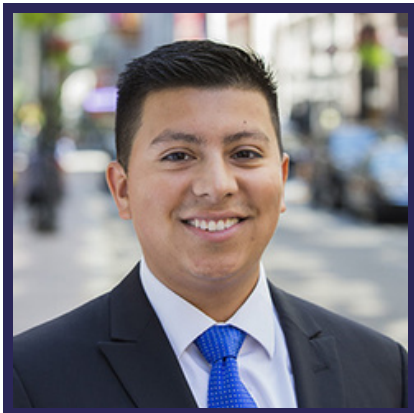
Lesley Chuang

Lesley is a graduate of the University of Connecticut School of Law, Princeton University, and Union College.

Lesley Chuang is a scientist-turned-litigator at DLA Piper. She advises and defends corporations in the Life Sciences sector in a variety of disputes, including multi-district litigation and commercial litigation. Lesley also provides pro bono legal assistance to Afghan asylum seekers.

In addition to her practice, Lesley is a leader of the bar locally and nationally. Currently, she co-chairs the Mass Torts & Class Actions Committee at the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association and the Senior Associates Forum at the Boston Bar Association. She mentors law students through the Legal Mentor Network and Asian American Lawyers Association of Massachusetts.

Lesley resides in Arlington with her husband and two children and is an active member of her community. She serves as a Commissioner of the Equal Opportunity Advisory Commission and a board member for Arlington Family Connection, Inc.



Diego Huezo

organizations. He most recently served as Boston Mayor Michelle Wu's Deputy Director of State Relations. Before working at City Hall, he worked in the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) government affairs department, and in the offices of U.S. Senator Ed Markey and former Governor Deval Patrick. He also serves as an advisory board member of the Commonwealth Seminar, and Common Cause Massachusetts.

He lives in Hyde Park with his wife, two daughters, and dog.

Senior Director of Government Relations, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC)

Diego Huezo joined MassCEC in September 2023. Diego works with state and legislative stakeholders to identify and advocate for MassCEC's legislative and budget priorities in order to accelerate the state's clean energy transition.

Diego is the proud son of immigrants from El Salvador and grew up in Jamaica Plain. He attended the Needham Public Schools system through the METCO program, and then graduated from Boston University.

Diego has worked at all three levels of government and has a deep understanding of government relations, having worked extensively with elected officials and their staff at the municipal, state, and federal levels, as well as with state agency stakeholders, regional partners and community advocacy

“EMERGING ALUMNI HONOREE”



Rodline Louijeune

Reserve Bank of Boston.

Rodline is a native of the Hyde Park and Mattapan neighborhoods of Boston. Her parents Marie and Robert immigrated to Boston from Haiti in search of a better life for her and her three sisters.

Rodline is a proud graduate of the Boston Public Schools and is an alumna of the Posse Foundation’s scholarship program at Bryn Mawr College. She graduated from Boston College Law School with her Juris Doctor and L’Université Paris 1 : Pantheon-Sorbonne with a Master of Laws in French, European, and International Business Law. Her participation in the Commonwealth Seminar reinforced her interest in law and public policy as a tool to address societal harms. She credits many of the leaders of the Commonwealth Seminar — including former State Senator Jarrett Barrios, former State Representative Charlotte Golar Richie and Leverett Wing — for igniting her passion for public service and reminding her of the importance centering community.

Rodline currently serves as in-house counsel at the Federal



Carlos Prudencio

efforts have left a lasting impact on his community.

Carlos Prudencio, the 2020 recipient of the Rev. Peter J. Gomes Service Award, has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to his community. Supported by his mentor at Beyond Walls, Al Wilson, Carlos contributed significantly during the pandemic by distributing meals and leading racial justice initiatives in Lynn. He has been a driving force behind the expansion of the K-12 curriculum in Lynn, incorporating human rights values such as respect, compassion, and love. Together with the Human Rights Commission in Lynn, Carlos successfully garnered support for this initiative.

Additionally, he and his schoolmate, Damianny Garrido, have led a petition for a Black Lives Matter mural in downtown Lynn, a testament to their dedication to social justice.

As co-founders of One Lynn, One Love, Carlos, and Damianny secured approval and funding for this project during their senior year of high school in Lynn, MA. Carlos Prudencio's remarkable

“EMERGING ALUMNI HONOREE”



Adriana Taylor

Adriana is an HR Director, International Beauty Queen, Motivational Speaker, and Entrepreneur. Adriana uses her experience in Human Resources to help individuals present their best selves in interviews and for life. Adriana also uses her platform as an International Beauty Queen to be an advocate for mental health and minorities in politics. It is Adriana’s goal to take her experience and utilize it to run for public office in the future.



Jessica (Jay) Wong

Jessica (Jay) Wong (黃慧美) is a second generation bi-racial/Chinese American. Jessica serves as a Program Officer for the Mass Cultural Council and Community Engagement Coordinator for the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (ATASK). Her decade-long career has been largely dedicated to advocating for communities of color, promoting the importance of civic engagement, and providing safe spaces and opportunities for Asian American women.

Jessica previously served as the Program Director/Interim-Executive Director of the Massachusetts Asian American and Pacific Islander Commission, where she organized advocacy efforts, programs, and public events to raise awareness surrounding anti-Asian racism, amplify API voices/stories, and strengthen young API leaders.

Recently, Jessica earned her Masters in Public Administration and Asian American Studies from UMass Boston and a Bachelors in

Political Science from UMass Amherst. In her free time, she is in the planning stages of developing a curriculum on Mixed Race Asian Americans, as well as exploring her creative side in digital art and curating a street art gallery in October 2024.

“INSPIRATIONAL ALUMNI HONOREE”



**Cyndi Weekes
Bradley**

Cyndi Weekes Bradley is a highly experienced Bajan-American professional with over 20 years of data-driven expertise in equity, including a focus on racial equity. She has held various roles in the education field, including Teacher, Dean, School-Based Manager, Boston Principal Fellow, SPED Assistant Principal, Principal, Policy Reviewer, System-BUILDER & Analyst, Education Strategist, and Associate Lecturer.

In addition to her work in education, Cyndi Weekes Bradley is the Founder and CEO of The Equity Process, a boutique organization dedicated to promoting executive leadership coaching, equity in various areas of identity, and mindful-compassionate awareness.

Cyndi coaches and serves as a confidant to C-suite executives, superintendents, and other senior leaders on daily basis. Her educational background includes a master's degree from Simmons University (formerly known as Simmons College) received in 2006. She has also completed an Executive Certificate in Leadership and Coaching from Brown University.

With that, Cyndi Weekes Bradley has pursued further training in mindfulness and compassion. She has completed numerous mindfulness courses and Stanford University's CCARE (THE CENTER FOR COMPASSION AND ALTRUISM RESEARCH AND EDUCATION) Program in Applied Compassion. At CCARE she completed her capstone project titled "Bridging the Gap Between Racism and Humanity in Our Education System," earning her a professional certificate in Applied Compassion.

Furthermore, she has completed The Commonwealth Seminar Program and Family Services of Central Mass' Basic Mediation training, acquiring certificates from both programs.

Overall, Cyndi Weekes Bradley's diverse background and extensive experience in leadership, executive coaching, education, equity, and mindful-compassionate practices make her a well-rounded professional committed to advancing equity and addressing racial disparities while ensuring success for all.



Fabienne Eliacin

As a Learning Pod Assistant with CPLAN (Collaborative Parent Leadership Action Network), Fabienne is responsible for working with families by oversee students for remote learning to support their needs. She also runs an infinity group to educate parents in Boston on Dyslexia and advocacy. She is a member of the board for Boston SpedPac, an advisor for B-Safe, A member for Decoding Dyslexia – MA, a stakeholder for EDCO on the Improvement MA IEP Project, she is the Troop Leader for Girl Scouts 82487 in Roxbury and the Director of Communication for Boston Mothers Care.

Previously, Fabienne was the Environment Services Coordinator at the InterContinental Boston. She brought her fuel to educate others in different capacities about recycle and global warming. She received many awards from the city and states about her work in the environment.

“EMERGING ALUMNI HONOREE”



Anita Yip

Anita Yip is a purpose-driven technologist with over a decade of experience in civic engagement, nonprofit management, and healthcare technology. Having a passion and commitment for organizations and initiatives that shift the paradigm of equity and access, she started her career by building capacity and fundraising for various causes and served on Friday Night Supper Program's Board of Directors. After learning that foundations give less than 1% of philanthropic dollars to organizations and programs assisting Asian women, she went on to co-found the Jasmine Asian Women Giving Circle. Most recently, while serving on the City of Boston's civic engagement council SPARK Boston, Anita launched the Rooted In Boston social justice event series that put money back into BIPOC businesses during pandemic while raising visibility of Asian Americans in civic engagement and programming.

Anita holds a BA in environmental studies and media arts and sciences from Wellesley College and a MS in corporate and organizational communication from Northeastern University. She is also the first in her family to graduate from college.

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“INSPIRATIONAL ALUMNI HONOREE”



**Raffi Freedman-
Gurspan**

Raffi Freedman-Gurspan serves as a Senior Associate Director for Public Engagement and the White House's primary liaison to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. She is also an Outreach and Recruitment Director in the Presidential Personnel Office. She is the first appointee in the Obama White House who is openly transgender.

Raffi previously worked at the National Center for Transgender Equality as Policy Advisor for the Racial and Economic Justice Initiative. Prior to moving to Washington, DC, Raffi was a Legislative Director in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, LGBT Liaison for the City of Somerville, Massachusetts and worked with the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition. She also assisted in course and research work at Boston University's Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies Program.

A graduate of St. Olaf College in Minnesota, Raffi was adopted from Honduras and grew up in Brookline, Massachusetts.



Joel Mora

Joél serves as the Assistant Director of Student Success Programs (SSP) at UMass Boston. SSP is under the Student Equity, Access, and Success (SEAS) unit, where he oversees the Success Boston initiative on campus as well as serve as an academic advisor under the Student Success Scholars (SSS) TRIO program. He began in August 2021 and came from the nonprofit sector where he served as the Education Programs Manager at the Hyde Square Task Force (HSTF) for the past 11 years, where he oversaw programs in the department such as mentoring for 8 th grade through 12 th grade youth, tutoring, the College Success Program, the HSTF alumni network, and the Young Men's Initiative. Joél helps college students reach their goals and dreams of going and graduating from college by helping develop the necessary skills needed to be successful and understand their purpose at UMass Boston to be successful.

He graduated from UMass Boston in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in Spanish and Education and a minor in Psychology. While in college, he was a Jumpstart member, Pearson Teaching Fellow and a participant of the Latino Leadership Opportunity Program (LLOP) through the Gastón Institute as well as the Beacon Leadership Program. While at UMB, he served as the coordinator of Casa Latina twice and as the Regional President of the Coalition of Latino Universities (CLU) for the city of Boston, as well as serving as the first president of his Alpha Line in his fraternity, Psi Lambda Phi Fraternity, Inc. Joél is currently serving as a board member for the Gaston Institute and My Brother's Keeper Boston. On a personal note, Joél is enjoying being a father to a very talented 9-year-old boy and an adorable (and bossy) 4-year-old daughter.

“INSPIRATIONAL ALUMNI HONOREE”



Natalie Ornell

Natalie Ornell is currently a law student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. She is a former Boston Public School teacher, journalist, former fundraiser and advocate for immigrant communities. She began her career writing for the Sampan Newspaper in Boston's Chinatown as a college student where she later spent several years raising millions of dollars in Planning & Development at a nonprofit, the AACA, which helps immigrants from over 100 countries.

Her stories have also been published in the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong, the China Digital Times out of UC Berkeley, the Quincy Patriot Ledger, the Associated Press, the WGBH-aided LinkAsia show blog and on WCVB among others. From 2018-19, she spearheaded the successful passage of a Massachusetts state law to permanently recognize Rosa Parks on all MBTA buses by applying the knowledge she gained from the Commonwealth Seminar. Organizing coalitions locally and nationally, she led a 15-month campaign in support of the bill she proposed to her state senator.



Raquel Quezada

Raquel Quezada is responsible for coordinating multicultural outreach. Raquel has worked in the area of advocacy in Massachusetts at a number of different levels during the course of his career. She contributes her understanding of the school systems as well as the state systems to the process of providing assistance to families, assisting them in gaining information while also providing support to them and aiding other families in the community.

As a wife and the mother of four children, one of whom has an impairment and two of whom have ADHD, I have shown that it is possible to keep moving forward in spite of challenges. Raquel's goal as a leader in the community is to provide assistance to families in the hopes that they will be heard and understood more clearly. When Raquel created the first radio show in Spanish in 2018 for people with disabilities and to educate others, one of the first things that everyone realized about her was her passion, devotion, and numerous levels of knowledge of how to raise children who have distinct and unique requirements. This was one of the first things that everybody

recognized about Raquel. Raquel goes to the local church, where she also does outreach to the Hispanic population. This is in addition to her work on the radio program. Founder of the charitable foundation that bears his name. Author of nine books that encourage inclusion, empathy, acceptance, and love, working to change the world for persons with disabilities. Because her organization provides humanitarian assistance to families who have children with special needs, the consulate of her home country, the Dominican Republic, has honored her many times for her dedication to helping those in need. She was presented with the "Dominicanisimo" award in September of last year, which acknowledged her as a heroine who serves to represent her nation in a distant location. Both his foundation and his program have been honored with a large number of honors, both inside the state of Massachusetts and outside its borders. At the University of Massachusetts Lowell, he is in the third year of his Psychology degree program.

In addition to that, she serves as chairperson of the Massachusetts Developmental Disability Council, is a board member of the Disability Law Center, and is also a board member of the waystone in Lawrence. She is now working with a representative and a senator on bill H 602, which is related to the provision of de-escalation strategies and procedures for school bus drivers that the Commissioner of Education has authorized.

She has a goal that one day, individuals with disabilities will live the same lives as everyone else and that disability will no longer be a subject to discuss at any table.

“INSPIRATIONAL ALUMNI HONOREE”



Gabrielle Rene

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the committee for selecting me as one of the “Inspirational Alumni Honorees.” I feel honored.

When I took the seminar, I had no idea how it was going to change my life. The knowledge I acquired has helped me to become a better community member and leader.

I truly believe that to whom much is required. As a Haitian American, I was brought to this country to benefit from the endless opportunities this country has. I pursued business my college education in business, finance, and taxation to empower myself, my family, and my community. After my training with The Commonwealth Seminar, I started teaching a free financial literacy class in my community but soon realized that the financial principles I had learned in college were insufficient. I needed to better understand those systemic barriers, which have kept certain communities at a disadvantage and have made the

American Dream inaccessible to many.

I was led to City Life/Vida Urbana. My involvement with that grassroots organization has equipped me to be part of the conversation and solution. Hence the reason why I host a weekly podcast “Let’s Talk Money with Friends” on several social media platforms. On our show, we said money encompasses everything.

I am committed to tackling difficult topics and working with the collective to make this world a better place for all. I thank The Commonwealth Seminar for igniting that community engagement passion in me.

**Thank you everyone for celebrating the
Commonwealth Seminar’s 20th anniversary with us!**

**We look forward to seeing everyone at future
Commonwealth Seminar events.**

Email: info@commonwealthseminar.org

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