



ABNY Women State Legislative Panel (Speaker Bios)

Assembly Member Grace Lee is a community organizer, small-business owner, mom to three children and first-generation American. She has a proven track record of successfully mobilizing and organizing around local issues, from co-founding Children First, a parent-led coalition demanding the safe cleanup of a mercury brownfield in the seaport, to empowering deaf tenants living in deplorable conditions on the Lower East Side to stand up to their building's management and demand repairs. Grace has also been a prominent voice against anti-Asian hate in New York City. She is the first Korean American woman elected to the New York State government.

Alongside her work in community organizing, Grace is the co-founder of Nine Naturals, a toxin-free beauty line for pregnant and new moms. She received her B.A. from Columbia University and her M.B.A. from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. Grace is a long-time Lower Manhattan resident where she lives with her husband and three young daughters.

New York State Senator Jessica Ramos has spent her life fighting for working families, advocating for labor, and organizing her local community. Born in Elmhurst to an undocumented seamstress and a printing pressman, Jessica was raised in Astoria, attended Queens public schools, and now lives in Jackson Heights with her two sons. A strong union advocate, Ramos worked with Build Up NYC to fight for construction, building and hotel maintenance workers in New York City. Ramos also worked with SSEU Local 371 and 32BJ SEIU, where she helped building maintenance workers, office cleaners and public schools cleaners win contracts that protected their rights, wages, and benefits.

Jessica was a member of Queens Community Board 3 and served as Democratic District Leader in the 39th Assembly District. Jessica sat on the boards of the Jackson Heights Beautification Group and Farmspot, Jackson Heights' community-supported agriculture (CSA) program. She has received awards for her work with the LGBTQ community and her advocacy on behalf of Women and Minority-Owned Businesses.

As the first American-born in her family, Jessica feels a deep sense of responsibility in bridging the gap between immigrant and non-immigrant communities. Jessica's mother crossed the Mexican border by herself at 24, and her father was arrested in a workplace immigration raid in the early 1980's and spent days held in a detention center.

Even as a teenager, Jessica was outspoken against poverty and the internal displacement of Colombians. She was elected President of the NYC Colombian Liberal Youth Council in 2002 and subsequently elected President of the NYC Colombian Liberal Party in 2005.

Most recently, Jessica served as Director of Latino Media for the City of New York. As the city's chief Latina spokesperson, Jessica helped keep our city's 1.87 million Spanish-speaking residents, and the community and ethnic media at large, informed about government services and initiatives.



Jessica credits her love for activism and public service to her parents, Colombian immigrants who fought for and won the right to dual citizenship for Colombian-Americans and founded Siempre Colombia, a not-for-profit organization in Jackson Heights.

Jessica does not have a driver's license—she rides the subway every day.

Assembly Member Amanda Septimo is a lifelong Bronx resident with a long, rich history of service to the community. Her spirit of activism and community leadership began in her adolescence and can be traced through the entirety of her career. At just 12 years old, Amanda became aware of the prevailing social, economic, and environmental injustices within our community, and soon began to organize around these causes throughout the South Bronx.

While still in her teens, Amanda began working with The Point Community Development Corporation in its teen activist program, A.C.T.I.O.N. It was during this time that Amanda was able to gain the fine-tuned understanding of what advocacy means for people in The Bronx. Playing an integral role in preventing the new jail at Oak Point, getting the Floating Pool to Barretto Point Park, and extending six bus services exposed Amanda to the power of community activism, and the power of a dedication to change.

In these same years, Amanda volunteered with various local and international groups, including the New York City Parks Department. There, she concentrated her efforts on tutoring local youth: teaching them to read, write, and offering vital mentorship and guidance. While volunteering with the International YMCA, Amanda traveled to West Africa and helped plant more than 300 various fruit juice trees, creating a much-needed boost to the ailing local economy. These public service efforts would gain Amanda the recognition of Community Board 2 and the New York Yankees, who awarded her the 2005 Youth Leadership Award.

Amanda went on to receive the prestigious Posse Scholarship, which earned her a full-tuition scholarship to Vanderbilt University. There, she remained actively involved on campus and used the skills and knowledge that she learned at home in The Bronx towards correcting the injustices within her surrounding community.

Throughout her college years, Amanda served as an intern with the Legal Aid Society fighting cases of domestic violence, with an emphasis on Spanish-speaking immigrants. Amanda also volunteered with the Metro Public Defenders where she operated as an intern case-work investigator; this work allowed Amanda to plant herself within the community, and tackle cases where defendants were often times victims of a criminal justice system stacked against them.

After her years at Vanderbilt, Amanda brought the work of her youth full circle and went on to work with Congressman Jose 47 84th Assembly District E. Serrano — whom she interned with for two years in high school — as a Community Liaison, before being promoted to District Director at 23 years old. In these four years, Amanda was able to observe the powerful connection between policy and opportunities for progress for people in The Bronx.

With this expanded experience and sharpened perspective of government, Amanda went on to work with the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) to ensure that school leaders and students have the resources they need to transform every school into a thriving learning environment. After working with CSA, Amanda Septimo fought to bring equity, justice, and true representation to the forefront in the South Bronx by running for State Assembly in the 84th Assembly District. While the campaign was ultimately unsuccessful, the experience



allowed Amanda to understand the issues of the community on a granular level and develop common-sense solutions that will ultimately help the South Bronx grow. She won the seat two years later.

Today, Amanda Septimo continues the fight to bring true equity in the South Bronx, so that people can get access to the resources, support, and representation they deserve.

Teresa Gonzalez is a partner at Bolton St. Johns, where she brings her expertise on stakeholder and community engagement, land use matters and city lobbying to nonprofit, real estate, and corporate clients. She is also a co-founder of DalyGonzalez, an M/WBE boutique lobbying firm, where she helps public and private institutions build and increase capacity, establish meaningful partnerships, and navigate complex government and community issues.

Ms. Gonzalez has an extensive background in government and public relations in New York City, including serving as Communications Director and Chief of Staff at the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit (CAU), and as Deputy Press Secretary at the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs during the Bloomberg administration. She has held several leadership positions at cultural institutions throughout her career including at the Brooklyn Children's Museum, the Brooklyn Arts Council and Brooklyn Bridge Park in New York, and at the Museum for Contemporary Crafts in Portland, Oregon. Ms. Gonzalez has been recognized for her work by the New York City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce as a "Women in Business" award winner in 2019 and as part of City and State Magazine's "Above & Beyond" list of accomplished women leaders in 2020. She received her bachelor's degree in English/Professional Writing from Kutztown University in Pennsylvania and received a master's degree in Nonprofit Management from Milano – The New School.

Ms. Gonzalez sits on the boards of the New York Immigration Coalition, NYIC Action, The New Majority NYC, the New York Women's Foundation, Hester Street Collaborative and is a member of the Fund for Public Housing's Advisory Council. She resides in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, where she was born and raised.