

# The New York Women's Foundation 30th Annual Neighborhood Dinner Celebrates Purpose and Community Leadership in the Bronx

*Honorees included Sanjana Khan, Wanda Salaman, Mariana Ortega, Mary Ellen Geisser and Joan McKay*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, November 20, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The 30th Annual Neighborhood Dinner, hosted by The New York Women's Foundation (NYWF) on November 13, 2024, was a sold-out celebration with over 240 guests honoring advocates and grassroots leaders dedicated to advancing gender justice in the Bronx and beyond.



Held in the heart of The Bronx, this milestone event connected community members, philanthropists, and supporters united by their commitment to creating lasting change.



We are a purpose-driven Foundation."

*Camille Emeagwali, Senior Vice President of Programs at NYWF*

Highlights included a pre-event panel discussion led by members of the Bronx Economic Justice Project, a collaborative initiative launched by NYWF to support a cohort of Bronx-based organizations advancing economic justice and environmental resilience.

The panel was moderated by Cecilia Cortes Vila, NYWF's Senior Program Officer, and featured Sandra Lobo,

Executive Director at Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, Joanne Grell, a member leader at CASA, and Rusia Mohiuddin, the principal of Universal Partnership and the BxEJP facilitator. It also featured Camille Emeagwali, NYWF's Senior Vice President of Programs, and Neighborhood Dinner Steering Committee Member Michelle Henry, Executive for Community Engagement at JPMorgan Chase.

The evening honored changemakers who have significantly impacted communities, especially in the Bronx:

- Wanda Salaman, Executive Director of Mothers on the Move, was awarded the Neighborhood

Leadership Award for her advocacy for environmental and housing justice in The Bronx.

- Sanjana Khan, Executive Director of Laal NYC, recognized with the Neighborhood Leadership Award for her commitment to uplifting South Asian women.
- Mariana Ortega, Director of IT and Facility at Cooperative Home Care Associates, was honored with the Spirit of Entrepreneurship Award for her dedication to equitable workforce practices.
- Mary Ellen Geisser, former NYWF Board Member, received the Lifetime Achievement Award and accepted the award on behalf of Joan McKay, whose posthumous award celebrated their shared legacy in philanthropy and community leadership.

BronxNet's OPEN Friday host, Rhina Valentin served as Mistress of Ceremonies, guiding the evening with warmth and energy. The evening featured a performance by New Settlement Next Level Dancers, a community partner program encouraging Bronx girls and young women to find their voices through dance. Attendees also enjoyed fare provided by members of the Street Vendor Project, another valued NYWF community partner.

Throughout the evening, a powerful theme resonated: Power and Purpose – a celebration of the unwavering sense of purpose that has guided NYWF since its inception. Rusia Mohiuddin reflected on how many foundations often prioritize power over purpose but noted that NYWF stands apart by placing purpose at its very core.

In her heartfelt closing remarks at the panel, Camille Emeagwali, Senior Vice President of Programs at NYWF, affirmed this commitment, declaring, "We are a purpose-driven Foundation."



Neighborhood Dinner Honorees Wanda Salaman (Mothers on the Move) and Mariana Ortega (Cooperative Home Care Associates) with Mistress of Ceremonies Rhina Valentin (Photo Credit: Shutterstock / Jared Siskin)



The New York Women's Foundation President and CEO Ana L. Oliveira addressing the crowd (Photo Credit: Shutterstock / Jared Siskin)

This guiding belief, she explained, has been NYWF's foundation and compass, directing its work toward creating meaningful impact.

This commitment was echoed in the speeches of honorees and presenters, each emphasizing NYWF's enduring dedication to supporting communities, uplifting voices, and driving lasting change. From its founding to the present, NYWF's mission stands as a testament to purpose-driven work and transformative impact.

Ana L. Oliveira, President & CEO of NYWF, echoed this inspiring message, paying tribute to the founding mothers, whose clear and unwavering vision continues to shape NYWF's dedication to community empowerment. Their legacy of purpose was not only the heart of the evening's celebration but also a testament to NYWF's dedication to transforming lives, building communities, and fostering impactful change.

NYWF expresses deep gratitude to all attendees and sponsors, including presenting sponsor JP Morgan Chase, for their continued support.

Notable attendees included: Sanjana Khan, Wanda Salaman, Mariana Ortega, Mary Ellen Geisser, Ana L. Oliveira, Danielle Moss Cox, Mary Baglivo, Victoria Chu Pao, Helene Banks, Lola C. West, Anne Delaney, Vanessa L. Gibson, Rhina Valentin, Nancy Clipper, Ariana Elezaj, Elba Montalvo, Camille Emeagwali, Joanne Grell, Cecilia Cortes Vila, Sandra Lobo, and Vanessa L. Gibson.

The 2024 Neighborhood Dinner event steering committee included Lisa Holton (Co-Chair), Haydee Morales (Co-Chair), Jeanne Mullgrav (Co-Chair), Keisha Ballentine, Jaime Bartoletti, Diane Blake, Aiyounng Choi, Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, Imani Darden, Moira Dorsey, Jacqueline Ebanks, Monique Edwards, Maritza Guillaume-Émile, Michelle Henry, Kemisha Henry, Emma Justice, Juli Kobayashi, Sheri Sandler, and Frances Zaruski.



Honoree Sanjana Khan (Laal NYC) accepting the Neighborhood Leadership Award (Photo Credit: Shutterstock / Jared Siskin)



Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson addressing the crowd (Photo Credit: Shutterstock / Jared Siskin)

Visit [www.nywf.org/nd2024-reflections](http://www.nywf.org/nd2024-reflections) for more information and images from the event.

About The New York Women's Foundation (NYWF):

The New York Women's Foundation creates an equitable and just future for women, girls, gender-expansive individuals and their families by investing in bold, community-led solutions to ignite action for gender, economic, and racial justice. Since 1987, The Foundation has invested \$125 million in 500+ organizations, creating a vibrant community of grantees, philanthropists, advocates, innovators, and change-makers.

To learn more about The New York Women's Foundation's work to transform lives, families, and communities, please visit [www.nywf.org](http://www.nywf.org).

I: @nywomensfdn | F: NewYorkWomensFoundation | X / T: @nywomensfdn

Norah Lawlor

Lawlor Media Group, Inc.

+1 212-967-6900

[email us here](#)

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