



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Senator James Sanders Jr. Inspires Women to Run for Office at Leadership Luncheon

JAMES SANDERS JR. March 31, 2018



In recognition of Women's History Month, Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village, Far Rockaway) held a Women's Leadership Luncheon on March 31, 2018 at Greater Rescue Church of Christ in Jamaica, where the topic of discussion was how to run for office and win. Experts were on hand to explain the democratic process and offer tips. They included Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte, Emerge America and Women of Color for Progress.

"When it comes to politics, we need a little less macho and a little more cooperative thinking and nobody has a better style of leadership in a cooperative way than women," Sanders said. "Your assignment today is to figure out what drives you, what is your fire, what is the issue that is near and dear to you? We need your voices."

This year, women are on the verge of make great gains in political elections. Across the country, more women are running for office than ever before, especially for seats in Congress. More than 500 women, both incumbents and challengers, are running for seats in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate.

"Everything counts, every door you knock on, every hand you shake, everything counts," said Assembly Member Rodneyese Bichotte.

Local attorney and former City Council candidate, Hettie Powell, also offered the attendees some advice on how to run for office, reflecting on what she could have done better to ensure a victory,. However, she assured the attendees that she was not bitter over her loss. Powell stressed the importance of raising enough money to run a proper campaign and to ensure the receipt of matching funds, knowing your team, making sure you have excellent canvassers, accurate petition numbers, and mobilizing and persuading voters.

"I thought there was no way I could lose," Powell said. "Everybody told me they voted for me, but sometimes your friends may not be your friends. I didn't win, but not because of a lack of hard work. I worked hard and I'm still standing. I know I did everything I could and I'm proud to know that I ran to represent you."

Amanda Farias of Women of Color for Progress, an organization dedicated to creating an

inclusive and transparent political system that empowers women of color to excel, lead, represent and be heard, stated that it is important to not only know the problems affecting your community but to also have concrete solutions. She also stressed the importance of knowing the different levels of government and the roles of each one, so you can determine how that plays into your solutions.

Guest speaker Benjamin Yee, secretary of the New York Democratic Party and the State Committeeman for NY's 66th Assembly District spoke in great detail about the electoral process including the two-party system, districts of governance, redistricting and gerrymandering. He also suggested important action items such as registering to vote, registering with a political party and voting in a primary.

Ny Whittaker of EmergeNY, an organization whose mission to increase the number of Democratic women leaders from diverse backgrounds in public office through recruitment, training, and providing a powerful network, spoke about some of the challenges women face when running for office and as well as some of the hurdles they can expect to encounter.

"We may have kids we have to get out of bed, we may be dead tired, but we have to make the food, we have to clean the house, we have to take care of the family members, we have to deal with the people in our office, and still try to keep it all together," Whittaker said. "This event is really not about empowering women. We have always had the power. This is about seeking our place in history."