



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Zellnor Myrie

# **Sen. Myrie Recognizes Community Leaders with Senate Commendation Awards**

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New York State Senator Zellnor Y. Myrie (D-Central Brooklyn) issued Senate Commendation Awards to healthcare workers and community leaders who have shown exceptional dedication to Brooklyn and New York this year. The Commendation Award is the second-highest honor the Senate can grant to an individual, and is reserved for those who go above and beyond in their service and commitment. Each honoree was presented with their award and a proclamation honoring their service.

"During this dark year, we have seen several bright lights who have provided extraordinary service to our community by stepping up and helping others," said Senator Myrie. "As frontline workers in our hospitals and nursing homes, advocates for our tenants and businesses, and activists working with and for our young people, these incredible individuals have shown remarkable dedication in the midst of a global pandemic, a recession and an ongoing fight for racial, social and economic justice.

"Presenting the Senate Commendation Award is one of the highest honors I can bestow on these community leaders. I am so proud to recognize them for their service."

The awardees included (biographies and photographs below):

- Arthur Tuohy, Kings County Hospital

- Captain Barry Felton, Kings County Hospital
- Dr. Joseph Gorga, Kings County Hospital
- Gem Snagg, Kings County Hospital
- Angela Cooper, McKinney Nursing Home
- Fredrick Okunade Adeyemi, McKinney Nursing Home
- Janet Ethel Larghi, McKinney Nursing Home
- LaJenna Bartley, McKinney Nursing Home
- Dale Charles, IMPACCT Brooklyn
- Dr. John Flateau, Medgar Evers College
- Judith Goldiner, Legal Aid Society's Civil Law Reform Unit
- Dr. Robert Gore, KAVI (Kings Against Violence Initiative)
- Richard Green, Crown Heights Youth Collective
- Pastor Gilford Monroe, 67th Precinct Clergy Council
- Elizabeth Yeampirerre, UPROSE
- Dr. Melony Samuels, The Campaign Against Hunger

"One of the enduring lessons of 2020 is that community-minded individuals can make a tremendous difference," continued Senator Myrie. "Our neighborhoods are better, stronger, safer and healthier because of their service. I am so grateful for their dedication, and am proud to represent them in the Senate."

### **Honoree biographies**

**Arthur Tuohy** personifies the dedication and commitment that enables Kings County Hospital to be the flagship of NYC H+H and an extraordinary Facility, providing a safe and patient/staff friendly environment. Arthur continually leads by example and sets the standard for the entire Facilities Department and Hospital through an unrivaled work ethic. Mr. Tuohy combines that driven work ethic with a direct but fair personality, focusing on consistent communication with all staff he is involved with. Artie is the calm in the storm, a guiding presence for accountability in the workplace; he is a true leader in all of his endeavors.

**Captain Barry Felton** became a Hospital Police Special Officer in 1999; he has since moved up the ranks from Sergeant to Lieutenant and eventually reached Captain's rank, which is the highest rank within the Hospital Police Department. For his job security and family matters, Captain Felton enjoys working with his co-

workers and subordinates and guiding them in the right direction. He equally likes helping the public, patients, and visitors alike. He often attends Broadway plays and movies. He is a regular Churchgoer and enjoys spending time with his family. He truly enjoys helping and educating people from all walks of life.

**Dr. Joseph Gorga, MD** has been an attending physician at Kings County Hospital for six years. He is board-certified in internal medicine, pulmonary and critical care Medicine. Dr. Gorga attended his internal medicine residency, pulmonary and critical care fellowship at Kings county/SUNY downstate. During the COVID pandemic, Dr. Gorga worked tirelessly in the front line taking care of critically ill patients in the intensive care unit. He is a model and a leader for his peers.

**Gem Snagg** was born in Grenada, West Indies. Always having a passion for benevolence and nurturing others, she decided to move to London to pursue a nursing degree. Upon completing her nursing degree, she moved to Brooklyn, where she continued her education at St. Joseph College, graduating with a Bachelor of Science. Filled with a desire to give back to the Caribbean community, she became a staff nurse at Kings County. After a few years, she was promoted to head nurse in Critical Care and then to her current position as Assistant Director, overseeing the two Critical Care units. She is affiliated with the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses. Gem is an incisive leader who inspires her staff by demonstrating the importance of teamwork and ongoing education. She has received numerous accolades for outstanding work in her field. In 2004, she received an NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation Excellence Award in Clinical Practice and Kings County Executive Director's Award for Exemplary Performance and Clinical Excellence in 2006. She has been a mentor to many students and nurses, visits seniors in nursing homes, and has participated in countless community health fairs. Gem is proud to have been part of the Critical Care team during the Covid-19 pandemic. She and her nurses worked very closely with the doctors, ancillary staff, housekeepers, pharmacists, patient escorts, and more to give their desperately ill patients the best care they could. Everyone stretched their skills to the maximum and supported each other in ways they had never imagined. They worked together, cried together, and celebrated every small victory together. They truly exemplified the values of Kings County, and Gem is humbled to be part of this amazing community of healthcare givers.

**Angela Cooper** is a true daughter from Bon Accord Village, Tobago, born to Audrey Charles and Cecil Potts (deceased), credits the influences of her grandmother Marma and Adina Roberts (also deceased) for the woman she is today. She aspires to live by what she has learned; and hopes she can pass on those lessons taught by the village to others; so they can be empowered to their greatness. A graduate of Brooklyn College, this multi-talented woman continues to amaze everyone she meets, particularly young people. Her effervescent personality is so often described as magnetic, charming, assertive, outspoken, and at times bold. Angela's healthcare career began at the NYC Health + Hospitals / McKinney as a Service Aide in the Food and Nutrition Department. Angela was the first employee to be promoted to Coordinating Manager in the Nursing Department, then Director of Volunteer Services. She is now an Assistant Director of Communications / Public Affairs Director and Director of Volunteer Services. She oversees Marketing, Community Affairs, Customer Service, Mailroom, the Beauty Parlor, all in-house and community-oriented events, and is also the Liaison of the Community Advisory and Auxiliary Board. Under her guidance in the Volunteer Department, she helped cultivate young adults' healthy values and attitudes. For the past 15 years, she has supervised over 500 young adults in the DYCD Summer. Angela's dedication to McKinney's residents continues to be her motivational drive. She is instrumental in implementing a lot of annual events and programs that enhance the lives of those who depend on her.

**Fredrick Okunade Adeyemi** is a registered nurse at McKinney Nursing Home. He was born in Ondo city, Nigeria, and migrated to the United States in 2010. As an eager young immigrant who wanted higher education to fulfill his dreams, he proceeded to Long Island University Brooklyn to study Nursing, where he graduated in 2018. When COVID-19 entered the doors of McKinney, he was in for another awakening. A COVID unit was set up as part of the treatment plan. Without a second thought, he immediately headed the healthcare heroes team working patiently and diligently with the residents, some of whom he has lost and some who lived. As he witnessed firsthand how scared his residents were, he was overcome with emotional grief. He witnessed their transitioning daily without a family member at their bedside. To see them dying and family losing their loved ones in the hands of this deadly disease and could not be there to hold their hands – he did. He never gave up; he never gave in because he firmly believed it was God's calling to have him in this role in others' life.

**Janet Ethel Larghi** was born and raised in Long Island, New York. She was born with severe hearing loss. She attended parochial school from kindergarten through twelfth grade and went on to College to study Gerontology, Public Health Administration, and completed her Post-Master's Sixth Year Certification Program in Therapeutic Recreation Administration Service. Janet is a healthcare professional and has been working in the field for over thirty years in many capacities. Janet is Associated Director of Hospitals in Therapeutic Recreation at NYC Health Hospitals / McKinney. This position aligned her to direct contact with all residents and, by extension, their families. During the outbreak of COVID-19, Janet was instrumental in ensuring all programs remain in place but aligned with DOH/CMS guidelines. She headed up the team that assisted all residents with FaceTime calls and window visits, which enabled them to see their loved ones up close and personal.

**Lajenna Bartley**, better known to her colleagues as Jenna, was born in our own NYC Health + Hospitals / Kings County. Jenna attended Bishop Loughlin Memorial H.S., Brooklyn, and furthered her education at Hampton University, Hampton, VA. Jenna has 13 years of Administration experience, which includes seven years of HR experience allowed at the Manhattan Children Center; a private school for Children with Autism was her trajectory in joining the best healthcare corporation – NYC Health+ Hospitals/ McKinney as a temp. Because of her work ethic and philanthropic nature, Jenna was offered the opportunity to become a full-time employee. Her mannerism immediately had everyone gravitating toward her for everything administratively and otherwise. She has helped central stores reach compliance with HHC goals, successfully monitored facilities staff compliance for mandated POC and corp-wide in-service, and assisted with capital project planning for the facility and too much more to mention. As fate would have it, Jenna was at McKinney from the onset of COVID-19. As an employee who never took a day off, she worked with every department to get the job done, feeding over 400 staff daily for three months, setting up the on-site testing area. Through all the emotional cataclysms, Jenna faced each challenge daily, projecting NYC Health + Hospitals ICARE Values of Integrity, Compassion, Accountability, Respect, and Excellence and weathered the COVID storm.

**Dale Charles** is the Director of Economic Development and Commercial Leasing at IMPACCT Brooklyn, also known as the Pratt Area Community Council. IMPACCT Brooklyn is a community development corporation committed to helping residents build and sustain flourishing communities in Fort Greene, Clinton Hill, Bedford

Stuyvesant, Crown Heights, and Prospect Heights. Dale works closely with local Merchants Associations, elected officials, and community organizations in Central Brooklyn. She initiated a comprehensive commercial revitalization strategy that targeted a distressed section of major shopping corridors in Brooklyn that also serves as an educational platform for small businesses and property owners. Dale has been responsible for managing the Parkside Empire Flatbush Avenue Merchant Association and the Washington Avenue Prospect Heights Association. She has served thousands of individual businesses with technical assistance and referrals to resources in the past 20 years at IMPACCT. Dale has played a crucial role in the long-term collaborative process that led to the Fulton Street BID formation and the FAB Alliance. Ms. Charles currently serves on three business improvement boards. Before joining IMPACCT Brooklyn, Dale Charles was a business owner for 25 years and came to IMPACCT 20 years ago as a LISC Americorps Volunteer. Through her efforts, Brooklyn's commercial corridors have become better places to live, work, and shop.

**Dr. John Flateau** is a Professor of Public Administration and Political Science at Medgar Evers College, CUNY, a Historically Black College (HBCU). He is a fourth-generation Ph.D.; in American Politics, Government, and Public Policy; and has served as a Department Chair, Dean, and Vice President. A public affairs commentator and public intellectual, he is the author of *Black Brooklyn: The Politics of Ethnicity, Class, and Gender*; *The Prison Industrial Complex: Race, Crime and Justice in New York*; and contributor to *Racial Inequality In New York City Since 1965* (SUNY Press 2019); and *VIDA 45* (2019), a historic film on the powerhouse that he, Hon. Al Vann et al. co-founded that changed national, state, and local political landscapes. John leads Medgar's renowned think tanks, the US Census Information Center, and the DuBois Bunche Center For Public Policy, a driving force for NYS's Vital Brooklyn health care reform and community development initiatives. He is a top strategist and technician at the intersectionality of the Census, demographics, Voting Rights, Redistricting, campaigns, and elections. An activist and advocate from the 1960s until this day, John has worked on numerous historic federal, state, and local elections, Charter revisions, ballot propositions, and community action campaigns. He was Chief of Staff and campaign coordinator for Mayor David Dinkins, NYC's first and only Black Mayor; campaign manager for Hon. Helen Marshall, the first Black Queens Borough President, and many others. John embodies a diasporan family legacy of religious, educational, socio-economic, and political activism. He is a life member of the NAACP; and a member and past officer of Bridge AWME Church, one of the nation's oldest Black Christian congregations.

Residing with his family in the Bedford Stuyvesant community, John is a native son of the Great Migration, with Southern and African roots going back to the 1700s in the Chesapeake region and Louisiana by way of the Haitian Revolution.

**Judith Goldiner** is the Attorney in Charge of The Legal Aid Society's Civil Law Reform Unit ("LAS"), the oldest and largest legal services program in the country. She supervises the three units of the Law Reform Unit: public benefits, housing, and homeless rights. She develops and litigates an extensive law reform docket in state and federal courts, provides litigation assistance to Legal Aid's trial office attorneys, advocates at the state, city and federal level, including preparing and presenting testimony before the New York State Legislature, New York City Council, and numerous administrative agencies, conducts training for judges, attorneys, advocates and laypeople, participates in press conferences and media interviews, and supervises an extensive roster of pro-bono attorneys. She is a long time resident of Prospect Heights.

**Dr. Robert Gore** is a dynamic lecturer, speaker, activist, and emergency medicine physician based in Brooklyn, NY. For close to 20 years, in his personal life and professional career, Dr. Gore has explored and continues developing programming and solutions focusing on community violence and other disparities affecting urban and global health. Dr. Gore is a member of the 2016 inaugural class of TED Residents. He was one of the 2018 CNN Heroes alongside other humanitarians from around the world. He is a 2018 Presidential Leadership Scholar, a leadership program for people doing social impact work, coordinated by the presidential libraries of past U.S. presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, George H.W. Bush, and Lyndon Johnson. Dr. Gore is an attending physician and clinical assistant professor at Kings County Hospital – SUNY Downstate Department of Emergency Medicine in Brooklyn, NY. He is the founder and executive director of the KAVI (Kings Against Violence Initiative), a hospital, school, and community-based youth violence intervention prevention and empowerment program that targets teens that have been injured because of violence or at risk for violent and recurrent violent injury. He is the founder and director of the Minority Medical Student Emergency Medicine (MMSEM) Summer Fellowship, a mentoring and enrichment program for underrepresented minorities interested in Emergency Medicine, focusing on project development. When he's not working, he spends his time with his wife and baby boy, wandering or studying Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu at Gregor Gracie Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Academy, where he is a purple belt.



**Professor Richard Green** is a community leader, youth advocate, and veteran born and raised in Crown Heights, New York. He served in the US Marine corps and did a tour in Vietnam. In 1977, he founded the Crown Heights Youth Collective in response to the need to provide comprehensive services for disadvantaged youth. The Collective serves the diverse African American, Caribbean American, and Hasidim communities of Crown Heights. Over the past 30 years, the organization has helped more than 100,000 young people, including State Senator Myrie. A peacemaker, Richard Green played a pivotal role in quelling the 1991 Crown Height Riots. Mr. Green is currently an adjunct professor at Medgar Evers College, specializing in World Civilization, American Civil War History, African American History & Culture, and Biblical Studies. Professor Green has received numerous awards and accolades, including the Nelson Mandela Award and the Martin Luther King Award from former NYS Governor George Pataki.

**Pastor Gil Monroe** always had a lifelong dream of serving the church, especially the youths, and as such functioned as Youth Director for five years, developing programs for our young people at the now historic Mt. Zion Church of God 7th Day. He worked at their level, demonstrated that he understood their struggles, and worked tirelessly with them to enhance their spiritual maturity. He flourished in this capacity and became a ministerial and visionary trailblazer and spiritual shepherd to many. In May 2005, he was ordained to the ministry as Pastor, where he continues to show unyielding love for his church and its members. Pastor Monroe's dedication to saving youth from gun violence and gangs prompted him to become the founding President of the 67th Precinct Clergy Council, which serves as a liaison between the police and the community. He is a graduate of the New York Police Department Citizen Academy and the FBI Citizen Academy. Pastor Monroe works with various elected officials and community leaders as a moral voice and spiritual counsel on issues affecting the community at large. As the loving husband of wife Dianne, and father to Gianne and Joshua, he is a passionate advocate for families and children. Pastor Monroe and his family live in Weeksville, Brooklyn.

**Elizabeth Yeampierre** is an internationally recognized Puerto Rican attorney of African and Indigenous ancestry and environmental/climate justice advocate. She is the executive director of UPROSE, Brooklyn's oldest Puerto Rican community-based organization. She is also the Co-Chair of a national alliance called Climate Justice Alliance and the co-founder of #OurPowerPRnyc. Her award-winning vision for an inter-generational, multi-cultural, and community-led organization is the driving

force behind UPROSE. She is a long-time advocate and trailblazer for community organizing around just, sustainable development, environmental justice, community-led climate adaptation, and community resiliency in Sunset Park.

Elizabeth was recognized in 2015 by Vogue as a Climate Warrior and one of the 13 women on the frontline fighting against Climate Change. Ms. Yeampierre has been a featured speaker at local, national and international forums including Sage Paris 2015, 2016 GRI Amsterdam, White House Forum on Environmental Justice, Yale, Harvard, Cooper Union, Columbia, and universities, colleges, and conferences all over the country and spoke at the opening climate rally for Pope Francis at the National Mall, The Battle for Paradise at Cooper Union with Naomi Klein. Her work is featured in several books, also being featured in Latina Magazine, VOGUE, Vanity Fair, The Guardian, Grist, American Prospect, Al Jazeera, Huffington Post, Democracy Now, The Intercept, and a variety of media outlets throughout the United States, Latin America, and Europe.

In 2014, Ms. Yeampierre was part of the People's Climate March Mobilization leadership – a march of over 400,000 people across New York City. She played a major role in ensuring the frontline was made up of young people of color. She successfully proposed the adoption of the Jemez principles for democratic organizing, which have since become the roadmap to building just relationships in the climate justice movement. Elizabeth was recently featured in NY Times as a visionary paving the path to Climate Justice. In 2018, she was awarded Frederick Douglass Abolitionist Award FD200. She recently was named by Apolitical as Climate 100: The World's Most Influential People in Climate Policy.

**Dr. Melony Samuels** serves as the founder and executive director of The Campaign Against Hunger (TCAH, formerly Bed-Stuy Campaign Against Hunger), a community-based service organization in Brooklyn, NY. As the Executive Director, Dr. Samuels is responsible for daily operations, vision planning, and resource management for TCAH. Before founding TCAH, Dr. Samuels worked in the insurance industry and was the Chief Administrator for the Full Gospel Tabernacle of Faith church in Brooklyn, working extensively on strategic management, proposal writing, event planning, and business development. In 1998, she founded a small, traditional food pantry located in a church basement. The Campaign Against Hunger (TCAH) grew out of this effort, formally becoming a nonprofit in 2005. Today, the organization provides services to over 300,000 unique individuals each year. TCAH has expanded beyond the SuperPantry service to include mobile pantries, which

reach the South Bronx, the Rockaways, and all of Brooklyn.

Dr. Samuels' philosophy is that only through strong partnerships can lasting change arise. She has lived this vision by forming and presiding over the Bed-Stuy Providers Network, a collaborative group of 18 emergency feeding programs in the Bedford-Stuyvesant community. She sat on the Strategy Council of the Food Bank of New York, the Advisory Committee of City Harvest, the Council on Hunger and Food Policy, the Steering Committee for both the Manhattan Borough President and the Politics of Food Conference. She currently serves on the Vital Brooklyn Initiative Committee. Dr. Samuels also maintains close working relationships with the National Food Bank, Hunger-Free America, and the New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCHAH).

Dr. Samuels and TCAH were featured in the Bill Moyers Journal report on Hunger in America and numerous other publications, including the New York Times, May 22, 2017. Dr. Samuels was honored by the Brooklyn Community Foundation with the Brooklyn Do-Gooder Award and received the Food Bank of New York's Can Do Award. She was recognized as an Everyday Hero by the NY Post and was awarded their Liberty Award. Dr. Samuels was the recipient of the 2017 Chapin Award for Excellence from WhyHunger, a national nonprofit. TCAH was a finalist for the Spark Prize for Innovation awarded by the Brooklyn Community Foundation in December 2017.

Dr. Samuels received her doctorate in Religious Education from the Christian Outreach Bible College and Theological Seminary in Fayetteville, North Carolina.