



Women of **DISTINCTION**

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Polly Spain

Polly Spain is a community leader who has devoted her time and energy to serving in several roles, including as Vice Chair of Manhattan Community Board 7, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) tenant leader, special education teacher, United Federation of Teachers (UFT) delegate, and Mount Sinai West Community Advisory Board member.

Ms. Spain has fought vigorously on behalf of the disenfranchised, while upholding the values of civil dialogue and negotiation. Through her tenacity, she has won substantial victories for her neighbors and advanced justice, opportunity, and equality on Manhattan's West Side.

She began her career in public service as a special education teacher in Washington Heights. According to Ms. Spain, she chose that field in order to help "the students that need the most support." Eventually, she moved to the Pathways to Graduation program, where she helps nontraditional students — including homeless students and recent immigrants — to obtain their High School Equivalency diplomas. As a delegate for her UFT chapter, Ms. Spain also represents the interests of educators and the students they serve.

A longtime resident of NYCHA's 120 W. 94th Street building, Ms. Spain became President of the Resident Association in 2009. She organized meetings and formed the Federal 8 Consortium for Upper West Side NYCHA leaders. Eventually, she ascended to the role of Vice Chair of the Manhattan South District Council of Presidents — the largest NYCHA District Council in the City. As a tenacious leader, Ms. Spain secured free access to the internet for residents, as well as free healthcare and educational services.

Ms. Spain expanded her dedication to public housing residents as Community Council Treasurer for Police Service Area 6, which patrols NYCHA buildings in Upper Manhattan. In that role, she seeks to improve police and community relations through joint charitable endeavors, which include an annual Fellowship Breakfast and National Night Out on Crime events. In 2014, Ms. Spain was appointed to Community Board 7, where she led committees on public safety, housing, and education. When GID — the developer of Waterline Square — attempted to institute an amenity fee for income-restricted tenants, Ms. Spain utilized her community organizing experience to successfully defeat the multi-billion-dollar asset manager.

In December, Ms. Spain was elected President of the Westside Democratic Club. In this role, she wants to promote civic engagement among young people. As she knows all too well, determined activism can yield results.

***Polly Spain was selected as a
2024 Women of Distinction honoree by Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal***

