

Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK



Ann Cotton Morris

Ann Cotton Morris proudly and boldly led her community in western Queens for decades, serving her neighbors, her family, and her faith in furtherance of greater opportunities for more people. She lived for over 60 years in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments and spent much of that time serving residents as a volunteer and community leader.

Ms. Morris, lovingly known as Annie, was a graduate of the New York City public schools and attended City College of New York, where she majored in Early Childhood Education. She spent over 30 years working at Verizon.

Ms. Morris' true calling was community service. She held numerous roles in NYCHA programs, including as longtime President of the Woodside Houses Tenants Association. A leader among leaders, she also served for several years as President of the Citywide Council of Presidents, an organization of NYCHA tenant association leaders representing the collective voice of the New York City public housing community. Through her work, she advocated for critical improvements in facility infrastructure, fought deferred maintenance, and sought to increase programmatic opportunities to empower public housing residents to speak with their own voice and have the ability to chart their own paths to prosperity.

Ms. Morris felt strongly that it was her role to advocate for more opportunities for her residents, and wherever she saw a gap, she worked tirelessly to fill the void. She started the "Sisters in the Hood" program for teen girls, offering mentorship and career advice. She also began the "Woodside Gents" program for young men, pairing them with mentors and involving young people in sports. Ms. Morris also led the "Sister 2 Sister" initiative in Woodside Houses, and served as a member of the board of Urban Upbound, a prominent local nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of those living in public housing.

Ms. Morris shared a beloved family. She and her husband were proud parents of Julius and stepdaughter Shaek Morris, and grandparents of Jazmine, Ahje, D'anna, and Jules. Her Woodside and western Queens neighbors became her family, and she will always be known and remembered as a thoughtful, loving figure to her community.

*Ann Cotton Morris was selected posthumously as a
2023 Women of Distinction honoree by Senator Michael Gianaris*

