



Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Minerva Solla

Minerva Solla has remained dedicated to helping working people discover their own power in the fights for justice, dignity, and human rights for over 50 years. From her earliest days as a community organizer in New York City, to her most recent work as the Director of Cultural Affairs for the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA), she has remained steadfast in her quest.

Ms. Solla's union activism began when she, as a 15-year-old at Cathedral High School, took a part-time job at Bell Telephone. Weeks in, CWA called a strike. During the first few days, she and the other student part-timers, not knowing any better, crossed the picket line. After speaking with the workers on strike, Ms. Solla's union awareness was ignited, and she organized the other part-time workers to join the strikers on the line, despite threats of losing their jobs.

She carried those early experiences with her when she began working at Roosevelt Hospital in 1972, where she led a 47-day strike that earned them union representation through 1199.

Her powerful voice and fighting spirit continued to grow as she took on several organizing roles within 1199; she had a part in shaping the organization into the powerful union it is today. As a single mother of three, Ms. Solla fully involved her children in the campaign, wanting them to learn early the value and dignity that a union brings to workers. A staunch advocate for social causes, she founded the 1199 Latinos Unidos Committee to promote Puerto Rican culture across New York State and coordinated medical missions after Hurricane Maria.

Eventually, the focus of her work turned toward the Hudson Valley, where she led a series of successful organizing drives at local facilities. 1199's merger with SEIU opened doors for Ms. Solla across the country, allowing her to help thousands earn representation.

After her retirement, Ms. Solla was hired by NYSNA as their Upstate Organizing Director, to lead political action and to work on special campaigns, including Paid Family Leave and the Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act.

Today, Ms. Solla is a fixture at community causes and rallies, leading the crowd with her signature chants. Most recently, she coordinated a coalition of advocates and leaders to fight for the return of mental health and detox inpatient services. As a result, after two years of campaigning with health professionals, labor, and local leaders, 20 beds are returning to the community.

***Minerva Solla was selected as a
2022 Women of Distinction honoree by Senator Michelle Hinchey***

