



Immigrant Civic Leadership Program

MEET THE 2023-24 COHORT

We are excited to introduce the 2023 Immigrant Civic Leadership Program cohort! These participants will be using New York City as their classroom to explore how they can influence meaningful change and address complex challenges in their work partnering with immigrant communities.



Alex Hunter

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS

Alex leads communications and marketing to support the growth of NYC Care, a healthcare access program serving low-income and undocumented immigrant New Yorkers. Prior to joining NYC Health + Hospitals, Alex worked at the NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, leading rapid response communications, overseeing citywide public awareness campaigns, and supporting the development of public-private partnerships. Alex is a native French speaker and received his Bachelors in political science from Concordia University in Montreal. He completed his Masters in international relations at Queen's University in Canada, where he was awarded a research grant from Fudan University in Shanghai.



Amin Guevarra-Fernandez

IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY, THE BRONX DEFENDERS

Amin Guevarra-Fernandez was born in the Dominican Republic and raised in the South Bronx. He graduated NYLS as an evening student in 2019 and has been at the Bronx Defenders as an immigration attorney for the past 4 years. He started off working in NYIFUP but is now transitioning to being part of the team-based immigration practice. Since September 2022 he has also been the Lecturer at Law and Co-Director of the Bronx Defenders' Holistic Defense Externship at Columbia Law School.



Berlotte Antoine [in](#)

SENIOR PARALEGAL, THE NEW YORK LEGAL ASSISTANCE GROUP

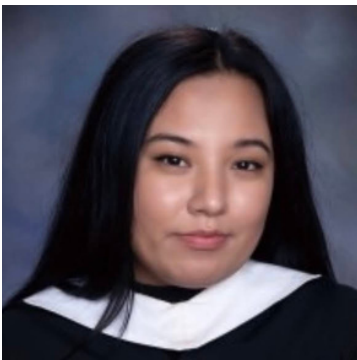
Berlotte Antoine works as a Senior Paralegal with the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). She is a member of the Board of Directors at the Community Legal Advocates of New York (CLANY) where she volunteers in assisting immigrants who are looking for immigration benefits. She is a board member at NYC Community Board 17 and chair for the Parks and Beautification Committee. She speaks Haitian Creole and French and has a weekly radio show in Haitian Creole and French. She has a master's degree in social work and is also a NYS Public Notary.



Dante Bravo [in](#)

YOUTH POLICY ANALYST, UNITED NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES OF NEW YORK

Through United Neighborhood Houses of New York, Dante works with immigrant communities across New York State but is especially passionate about the intersection of Latinx and LGBT+ issues. Bilingual in Spanish, Dante is a first-generation college graduate with a Master's Degree from Teachers College in Education Policy. Before UNH, they previously worked with Summer Search NYC as a post-secondary program associate and at Harlem RBI as an after-school counselor. Originally from Miami, FL, Dante has called NYC home since 2016.



Dolma Lama [in](#)

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS, OFFICE OF ASSEMBLYMEMBER STEVEN RAGA

Dolma Lama is the Director of Community Affairs at the Office of Assemblymember Steven Raga District-30 encompassing the vibrant neighborhoods of Woodside, Maspeth, Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, Astoria, and Middle Village. Drawing upon her valuable experience at DRUM, a passionate advocate for working-class South Asian and Indo-Caribbean immigrant families, she has honed her skills in understanding and addressing the diverse needs of our immigrant communities. In addition, her involvement in the 2021 City Council campaign in District-25 has equipped her with a deep understanding of local politics and grassroots organizing. She is fluent in English and Nepali, with conversational skills in Hindi. Complementing her Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Data Analysis, these experiences enable her to meaningfully contribute to constituents' welfare and empowerment.



Francis Madi Cerrada [in](#)

MANAGER OF MEMBERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING, NEW YORK IMMIGRATION COALITION

Francis Madi Cerrada (MPA, Marxe School, Baruch College) is a storyteller and theater-maker with an organizer and policy background. She was born in Caracas, Venezuela and is currently based in Queens, NY. Her creative practice explores the dynamics of intersectionality, migration/movement, Queerness, family, and love.

Currently, she is the Manager of Membership and Capacity Building at the New York Immigration Coalition.



Jeffrey Lau [in](#)

DIRECTOR OF THE ADULT LITERACY PROGRAM, CHINESE-AMERICAN PLANNING COUNCIL

Jeff Lau is the Director of the Adult Literacy Program at the Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc. He has been working with adult immigrants living in New York City for over 10 years. He is a first-generation American with basic conversational Cantonese. As a child of immigrants, he understands the challenges many immigrants face and is driven towards this work because he believes building a stronger New York means uplifting all our voices until we are all heard. He is a recipient of the 2019 UNH Award for Achievement in Civic Advocacy and 2022 Human Service Council's Changemakers Award.



Kadijah Almarales [in](#)

STAFF ATTORNEY, THE IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS PRACTICE, TAKEROOT JUSTICE

Kadijah M. Almarales, Esq. is a Staff Attorney on the Immigrants' Rights practice at TakeRoot Justice. As a West-Indian immigrant from Trinidad and Tobago, Kadijah's passion to advocate for immigrant rights and immigration reform stems from her own family's experiences with the immigration system. At TakeRoot Justice Kadijah works with grassroots organizations that serve black, asian and latinx immigrant communities by supporting these organizations in their advocacy and campaign strategies. Prior to joining TakeRoot Justice, Kadijah was a Justice John Paul Stevens Public Interest Fellow. Kadijah received her J.D. from the University of Oklahoma and her B.A. in Politics and Law from Southern Nazarene University.



Katherine Gomez

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LA VICTORIA FOUNDATION

Katherine Gomez is the Executive Director at La Victoria Foundation. She works with the Latino immigrant community with immigration needs. She is bilingual in Spanish and English and has seven years of experience working with the most vulnerable communities in Jackson Heights, NY.



Lourdes Vasquez

ATTORNEY, NEW YORK CITY HOUSING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Lourdes Vazquez is an attorney at NYC Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). She has worked at various NYC government agencies such as the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, NYC Service, and NYC Law Department. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Social and Cultural Anthropology from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Stony Brook, Master's in Public Administration from the City University of New York (CUNY) at Baruch College made possible through the National Urban Fellows Program, and Juris Doctorate from American University Washington College of Law.



Luba Cortes

IMMIGRANT DEFENSE COORDINATOR, MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK

Luba Cortes is a latine, writer, and cultural organizer, who believes that our lived experiences serve as the catalyst for change. Through their organizing, they have worked on mitigating the damage that senseless enforcement causes immigrant communities, by offering support in navigating the immigration system from detention to release, they are also responsible for creating effective campaigns to disrupt the detention of community members. Luba's expertise lies in building leadership through immigrant narratives, whilst understanding the complexities of identities, and navigating political landscapes for national and local advocacy. They currently serve as the Immigrant Defense Coordinator at Make the Road New York.



Lucia Aguilar [in](#)

DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY AND FOOD PANTRY, LSA FAMILY HEALTH SERVICE

Lucia Aguilar is the Director of Advocacy and Food Pantry LSA Family Health Service. She works with the low-income community of East Harlem, new arrivals, undocumented Hispanics, and first-generation students. Her parents came to New York in search of a better life, and she grew up seeing all the struggles they had to go through. She had to help them fill out documents and translate for them at a very young age. She still sees these same struggles in her community, and she wants to help. She has been working for LSA for 18 years. Lucia speaks Spanish and was a part of the United Way Advisory Board.



Mark Loyka [in](#)

U.S. DIRECTOR, GLASSWING INTERNATIONAL

Mark Loyka is the US Country Director at Glasswing International, an NGO that addresses the root causes and consequences of violence, poverty, and migration through education and health programs that empower youth and communities in Latin America and New York City. Glasswing works with New York City public schools and creates programs focused on immigrant youth and their communities. Mark is a 2017 CUP Fellow at the Council of Urban Professionals. He holds an MA in International Relations from Seton Hall University's School of Diplomacy and International Relations and a BA in History from Elon University. Mark speaks Spanish.



Nora Melendez [in](#)

MANAGER OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING, NEW YORK IMMIGRATION COALITION

Nora Melendez is the Manager of Community Programming at the New York Immigration Coalition. She connects immigrant and low-income New Yorkers across New York State to the services and resources available in their area—ensuring that support is culturally and linguistically relevant for all program participants. In her role, she has served over 10,000 people in-person and 30,000+ through digital events.



Rosanna Montilla-Payano [in](#)

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT, NORTHERN MANHATTAN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION

Rosanna Montilla-Payano is a dedicated advocate for social justice and philanthropy with over ten years of experience as a philanthropic executive. She specializes in strengthening nonprofits and fundraising practices, driving impactful change to immigrant communities particularly Latine in Northern Manhattan, through strategic partnerships and successful campaigns. Rosanna is a native Spanish speaker and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from UMASS Amherst. Rosanna has received relevant training from the Robin Hood Foundation/Berkeley Executive Coaching Program. She has held positions such as Director of Development at NMIC, Development Officer at the Reproductive Health Access Project, Development Associate at Care for the Homeless, and Development Associate at Queens College.



Rosemary Martinez [in](#)

DOMESTIC WORKER ORGANIZER, CARROLL GARDENS ASSOCIATION

Rosemary Martinez is Domestic Worker Organizer working with Immigrants and women of color. She was a domestic worker herself as was her mother. She studied and received a Bachelor's degree in Education in El Salvador. English is her second language, but her maternal Language is Spanish.



Sebastian Munn [in](#)

DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE SERVICES AND IMMIGRANT STUDENT LIASION, COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Sebastian Munn is the Director of College Services and the Immigrant Student Liasion at Comprehensive Youth Development. He has been in this dual role for four years and his organization partners with various public high schools, offering academic and supplementary services to immigrant youth and their families. In addition, he is a dual citizen of Spain and the US. He lived and worked in Spain for about four years as an English Teacher and translator. He uses Spanish on a daily basis at work, and one of the biggest perks of his job is having consistent Spanish practice so that he does not lose that skill.



Sonia Molina [in](#)

EVENTS MANAGER, MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK

Sonia Molina and her family migrated to the US when she was eight years old. She grew up and went to school in Queens, and with the support of her family, was able to become a first-generation college graduate. She joined Make the Road New York in 2013 as a bilingual receptionist. Her current role as Events Manager has allowed her to connect her Bachelor's degree in Hospitality Management to social justice. Through her time at Make the Road New York, she has also been able to join spaces such as the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee as Co-Chair!



Sristee Acharya [in](#)

IMMIGRATION CIVIL LEGAL ADVOCATE, THE BRONX DEFENDERS

Sristee Acharya is an Immigration Civil Legal Advocate with the Bronx Defenders, serving immigrant populations in the Bronx. Prior to joining the Bronx Defenders, Sristee was an elementary educator for three years, where she was the race and equity lead for her school. Sristee also worked as the lead researcher and data analyst for Karuna Foundation, an NGO working with disabled populations in rural Nepal. This role ultimately culminated in a publication in the National Judicial Academy Journal in Nepal. Sristee is fluent in Nepali, English, Spanish, and Hindi. She has her BA from University of California Berkeley and a MA in Education from Whitworth University.



Tim Tan

CONSULTANT SPECIALIST, PROJECT HOSPITALITY

Tim Tan works with Project Hospitality in New York City, as a consultant specialist. He speaks Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. He leads the Asian outreach team to help clients get health resources, including food, vaccines, housing, healthcare, and tax services. He serves more than 400 clients every week. Tim helps his Chinese clients translate documents and applications in order to access services. He builds impactful partnerships with different organizations and small business clients. He organized several community events in Asian communities in order to promote health resources for clients and coordinates with different organizations and groups to make events successful.