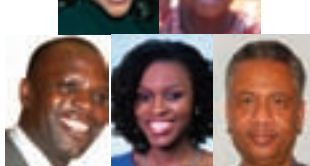
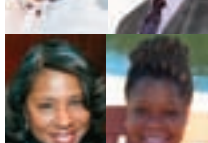
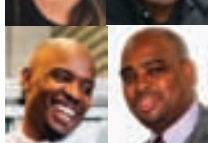
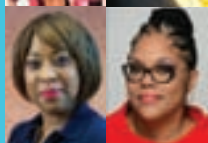
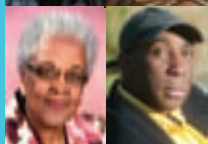
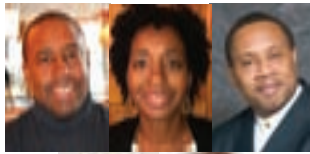


# Caribbean Life



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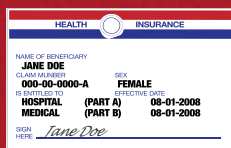


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# We celebrate those who make an impact

The contributions of entrepreneurial Caribbean Americans have helped to improve our city and distinguish it as a diverse place of great opportunity for hard-working people from everywhere.

Caribbean Life and Community News Group are pleased to celebrate the proud Caribbean-American heritage, and feel so strongly about its benefit to our communities that we've dedicated this special section to 27 Caribbean Americans who have touched our lives in exemplary ways.

The notables lauded in these pages are ambassadors of change, ranging in age, experience, and representing a myriad of Caribbean countries, but they are all equally worthy of praise as our 2016 Impact Awards honorees.

Here's a sneak peek at some of their inspirational stories:

- The first woman of African descent with ancestors from Trinidad and Tobago to become chaplain of the Church Center for the United Nations says her vocation chose her on her first day of seminary class — Sept. 11, 2001 — when her professor informed her, "Theology is the search for meaning, meaning in the midst of tragedy." Then the Twin Towers fell.

- A boy who came here from Jamaica and grew up to be an executive director of a grass-roots business collective, today oversees one of the most thriving commercial districts in the country with an eclectic mix of nearly 400 businesses.

- A founder, president and chief executive officer of one of the largest privately owned arts schools in Queens and Brooklyn with more than 40 staff and thousands of alumni, also provides performing arts education to public school students, plus vital services to early childhood, youth, senior, adult, and faith-based organizations.

We are proud of the opportunity to recognize these and other Caribbean-American superstars, and formally celebrate their accomplishments at the Caribbean Life Impact Awards Gala on the evening of Nov. 17 at Paradise Caterers in Brooklyn.

We thank our readers, for your involvement in the nomination process, for without you many of these heroes would remain unsung, and we hope you enjoy reading their inspiring and impactful stories as much as we did writing them.

— CNG and Caribbean Life

## Gala MC: Nelson A. King

Award-winning Caribbean Life journalist Nelson A. King, Ph.D, has made an impact locally, nationally, and internationally during a prolific academic odyssey spanning more than 35 years.

Dr. King was a U.S. correspondent for the Caribbean's only news agency — the Barbados-headquartered Caribbean Media Corporation — for more than a decade, and held the same position for The Vincentian newspaper in his native St. Vincent and the Grenadines. His vast portfolio of work features tenure with assorted media outfits, including Daily News' Carib Beat magazine, the Queens Chronicle newspaper, WNJR Radio, and the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Our emcee is an accomplished professional with seven degrees — including a doctorate, three masters, and two law degrees! — but there's even more to his story:

- Dr. King was a staff sergeant in the New York National Guard, and holds a number of military and civilian awards, including the U.S. Army Commendation Medal, and the "Iron Man" Award for being the "strongest man" in his battalion while attending aircraft technician school at Fort Gordon in Georgia.

- He is an adjunct professor at Medgar



Evers College.

- He has more than 23 years of public health experience, working in a number of supervisory, managerial, and administrative positions at the city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, and University Hospital of Brooklyn.

Dr. King served is an associate member of the Central Brooklyn Lions Club, in addition to being past vice president of the Brooklyn-based Vincentian Christian Charity Organization.

He is also the recipient of numerous community service awards, including citations from the State Assembly and City Council.

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## Caribbean Life

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# Tai Abrams

An entrepreneur and business coach

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

United States, of parents from Guyana.

**OCCUPATION:**

Government consultant; entrepreneur; business coach; co-founder and CEO of AdmissionSquad, Inc.

**MOTTOS:**

“Hard work pays off.”

“Having a large-scale vision to get out there and fix a broken system pays off.”

Brooklyn-born and raised Tai Abrams is of Guyanese heritage. An entrepreneur and business coach, she is the co-founder and CEO of AdmissionSquad, Inc., an education non-profit with a mission to get black and brown students into New York City’s top high schools.

Having attended the specialized competitive Bronx High School of Science, Tai Abrams later discovered the alarming statistic that only nine black students out of 1,000 were getting into one of the city’s other top school — Stuyvesant High School. She noticed this shortage was an epidemic across New York City.

In 2013, Abrams got busy structuring a highly effective program to support Caribbean American middle schoolers and other black and brown students to become more competitive and successful in top high schools’ admissions process.

A 2009 graduate of Duke University, with a degree in mathematics and a former top-tier government consultant, she is relentless in her efforts to go above and beyond for the youth, working to grant access to more opportunities for them through intervention strategies.

Her program has yielded an 80 percent success rate for the past two years and under her leadership, more than 700 students have received early exposure to the specialized high school admissions exams, the SHSAT. More than 500 parents have also received parent workshops to close the information gap.

A critical influence?

“Mr. Reid, my Barbadian, middle school math tutor demonstrated through his highly effective teaching strategies, how impactful outside of school intervention strategies could be for a child’s success,” she says.

Abrams is the recipient of numerous awards including the Dean’s List with Distinction, Congressional Black Caucus Award, and You Make a Difference Award.



# Darnell Benoit

Helps immigrant students be successful

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

Haiti.

**OCCUPATION:**

ESL teacher, founder and director of Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project.

**QUOTE:**

“Education is the property of no one. It belongs to the people as a whole and if education is not given to the people, they will have to take it.”

— Che Guevara

Haitian-born Darnell Benoit founded the 12-year-old community-based Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project, which partners with immigrant students ages 14-21.

Why this literacy project?

“I was an ESL teacher for many years and saw that many young adult immigrant students weren’t graduating high school or even learning English in high school,” Benoit responds. “I wasn’t satisfied and knew I needed to do something more to help immigrant students be successful.”

Benoit explains that Flanbwayan’s priority is enrolling students in high school immediately upon entering this country.

To this end, the project is starting a campaign for high school enrollment for newcomer immigrants.

“The process is so challenging for these families with no knowledge of the school system and there is no one in the Office of Enrollment who speaks Creole and can help with information,” she says.

“We don’t want these students to go to failing schools,” she adds.

On the positive end, Benoit has witnessed

what support means.

“I have seen over 500 immigrant students graduate high school and have successful lives, many going on to college.”

Her work has transformed hundreds of lives.

In Flanbwayan, student-members also find a safe space where they discuss issues, share experiences, and express views on educational issues.

Benoit is the Achievement Award recipient from Haitians United for Development and Education and the Antonia Pantoja Advocacy Award from NY State Association of Bilingual Education.

Benoit recognizes her father’s impact, “He taught me to share and to help whenever possible.”

“I love my work,” she says. “I was 13 when I came here. Being around the students keeps me young.”



# Rev. Dionne P. Boissière

A champion who works for peace with justice



## BIO FILE

### BIRTHPLACE:

United States of parents from Trinidad and Tobago.

### OCCUPATION:

Chaplain of the Church Center of the United Nations, Manhattan, ensuring that the church center provides sacred space, worship, hospitality, community advocacy and a forum for partners and civil society.

### QUOTE:

"I found God in myself and I loved her ... I loved her fiercely."  
— Ntozake Shange

Caribbean-American Rev. Dionne P. Boissière is the chaplain of the Church Center for the United Nations (CCUN) and says her vocation chose her on the fateful day of Sept. 11, 2001. Born in the United States, her parents are from Trinidad and Tobago.

In ministry for almost 18 years, Rev. Boissière has been ordained for almost 10 years. She received her Masters of Divinity at Union Theological Seminary with a focus on ethics and religious education.

Rev. Boissière is the first woman of African descent and Caribbean heritage to hold the position of chaplain of the CCUN. Commissioned by United Methodist Women, her position allows her to champion the work of peace with justice on behalf of those on the margins, especially, women and girls worldwide.

Her vocation chose her, she says.

Her first day of seminary class was Sept. 11, 2001. Her professor Dr. James Cone told the Systematic Theology class, "Theology is the search for meaning, meaning in the midst of tragedy."

Right after his statement, a fellow seminar-

ian ran in to report that the Twin Towers were hit.

Rev. Boissière teaches, counsels, and conducts workshops throughout the tri-state area and beyond. She provides leadership for several organizations and larger ecumenical and interfaith institutions.

This clergywoman recognizes her greatest influence, the late Rev. Dr. Ella P. Mitchell who "not only set a standard for women in ministry but was a wise and grace-filled mentor with a passion for teaching, preaching and the work of social justice."

Rev. Boissière is among those featured in Rev. Mitchell's book on preaching women.

Serving on several boards, most recently, Rev. Boissière was elected as the co-chair of Ecumenical Women at the United Nations.

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# Patrick Buddington

Helping others get to the next level



## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

Jamaica.

**OCCUPATION:**

Business development executive; Founder, CEO and chief marketing officer, IMC Media Group Corp., a Brooklyn-based, boutique ethnic branding, and marketing agency.

**QUOTE:**

“If there’s no struggle, there’s no progress.”

— Frederick Douglass

Jamaican-born Patrick Buddington has a stellar 31-year career in marketing.

He is founder, president, CEO and chief marketing officer for the Brooklyn-based ethnic media management agency, IMC Media Group, which specializes in brand identity and advertising campaigns for small and mid-size businesses, advertisers, and international firms.

Digicel Group, Grace Foods USA, CaribZone.com, Pathfinders Magazine, Rocky Mountain Energy Drink are among his clients as well as select local and national political and advocacy campaigns.

He primarily targets Caribbean-American consumers in the United States and their respective homelands. He uses traditional — tv, radio, and print — and non-traditional — word-of-mouth community promotions, online banners and social media outlets, utilizing his extensive experience of integrated marketing, planning / placement as well as sales to reach consumers.

He has been a consultant to develop marketing programs targeting African-Americans, Caribbean-Americans and other emerging

consumer markets.

Buddington holds undergraduate and MBA in Marketing degrees from Hofstra University.

He thanks his late mother, Ms. Grace Kerr, for his accomplishments. With limited education, no family connections, and leaving behind five children, she migrated to the United States to be employed as a domestic worker.

In short order, she got her GED, nurse’s aide certification, and brought her children to the United States.

Buddington’s knack for selling stuff started at age 7 with painted rocks in Jamaica. He recalls bombarding his family and friends with “101 business ideas.”

Through his work as a marketer, he helps small business owners or community-focused organizations that want to connect with New York’s immigrant populations.

He says, “I put my skills to use daily. My primary goal is to help you — a not-for-profit organization or small business owner get to the next level.”

# Nikisha Carlini

An advocate for animal welfare



## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE**

Trinidad and Tobago.

**OCCUPATION:**

Public relations; Avocation; Animal rights advocate; Volunteer dog walker; Activist.

**QUOTE:**

“Any form of cruelty to any species is unacceptable and should never be tolerated. If we report animal cruelty or suspicion of cruelty, by being the voice for the animals, we can make a difference for at least one life.”

Nikisha Carlini was born in San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago, and after being raised on a farm and learning about animals first-hand, she has made advocating for the voiceless creatures her passion.

A journalism graduate from University of Florida, she has been working in public relations for 16 years.

Carlini’s long-time passion is for the care and advocacy of animals. She believes that reporting cruelty can make a difference.

Fervent about animal treatment, Carlini uses the power of social media to raise awareness toward animal welfare. She circulates and signs petitions, writes letters to senators, posts news, and protests abuse.

“I was raised on my grandparents’ farm,” she says, treasuring her childhood experiences. “My fascination with animals began early. I learned things that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.”

She recalls, “At a very young age, I could tell when a duck was pregnant and when a cow was ready to give birth.”

She found out firsthand about animals

growing their families.

“The animals on the farm became my friends. I loved and cared about them like no other and I take that love and passion with me now.”

Also she was in conflict on the farm, crying for days knowing that her “buddy” was going to be slaughtered.

“In my adulthood, I made a conscious decision not to eat animals,” she says.

She is also a volunteer dog walker at the local Animal Care and Control — an animal shelter and participates in animal-affiliated charity events.

For humans, she volunteers with New York Cares that improves education, meets immediate needs, and revitalizes public spaces.

“My dream, one day, is to open an animal sanctuary of my own,” she divulges.

# Michelle R. DeSouza Forte

An attorney who provides legal help to her community



## BIO FILE

### BIRTHPLACE:

Guyana.

### OCCUPATION:

Solo practitioner; Attorney at law; School board president, Thomas M. Cooley Law School.

### MOTTO:

“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”  
— Luke 1:37

Born in Guyana, Michelle R. DeSouza Forte came to the United States at age 15 and attended Erasmus High School. She pursued a career as a lawyer to fulfill her mother’s dream.

She speaks of her mother, “Growing up, I would always hear my mother mention that if it had been possible she would have become a lawyer. But raising nine children was her priority.”

DeSouza Forte pursued a career as a lawyer to fulfill her mother’s dream; it was a challenge.

Out of school for almost a decade — having studied political science — with one child, she returned to school in Michigan. Her husband took over child-care. In 2007, she graduated law school at Thomas M. Cooley Law School, ever grateful for the support of family and friends.

“I have not once regretted that decision,” she said.

DeSouza Forte operates a sole practice in Jamaica, Queens, providing a wide swath of areas of legal advice and representation.

She speaks so highly of fellow attorney, mentor Ellen Edwards, “one of a few African-

American women working as a defense attorney in a male dominated field.”

DeSouza Forte admired Edwards’s client commitment and authoritative manner. Our award recipient speaks of how she learned from this mentor qualities of boldness and aggressive negotiating to bring to her own practice.

A member of God’s Battalion of Prayer church, DeSouza Forte volunteers in several areas of ministry, including Sunday School, Shelter and Women’s Ministries and serves as the board president of the independent school — Battalion Christian Academy.

As an attorney, she is able to provide legal assistance to many community members. She also runs workshops, through various churches and schools, teaching the importance of Estate Planning.

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# Ricot Dupuy

Haitian broadcaster keeps his community informed

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

Gonaives, Haiti.

**OCCUPATION:**

Director, host and commentator, Radio Soleil.

**QUOTE:**

“When I came to this country you didn’t hear Creole. It was sad. You didn’t leave your country because you wanted to; you were forced to. You left because of the political or the economic situation.”

**MOTTO:**

“We are not neutral; we are objective but not neutral.”

Ricot Dupuy, director of Radio Soleil, the radio station for New York City’s Haitian community, was born in Gonaives, Haiti, but was forced to leave due to an oppressive dictatorship.

He studied philosophy in Port-au-Prince but by 1974, the oppressive Duvalier dictatorship and declining economy forced him and his two siblings to depart for New York City, settling in Brooklyn.

For 12 years, he devoted significant energy mobilizing public opinion against the dictatorship.

Dupuy graduated Brooklyn College. Having developed radio skills in Haiti and Brooklyn, he was called upon to launch a pirate station, eventually serving as a commentator for NJ-based programs.

When those folded he joined Radio Soleil.

In 2002, 10 years after its founding, Dupuy became station director.

“Things were developing so fast in Haiti. And the Haitian presence here got bigger. We could not give them stuff a la carte any more.” And he decided, “That’s what I’ll do,” he recalls.

With a limited staff, mostly volunteers,

Dupuy is the principal commentator, hosting a daily show at 7:30 pm and a two-hour Sunday afternoon show.

His commentaries and analyses have major resonance in the Haitian community.

He has interviewed Bill Clinton and Nelson Mandela, to name a few.

Broadcasting primarily in Haitian Creole with some French and English, accessed through the internet, Radio Soleil serves a million dedicated listeners as the go-to source of news for Haitians.

After the 2010 earthquake, Haitians gathered outside of the station for updates and the station helped them to communicate with family members.

Most recently, it served as a link, providing information related to the hurricane.

Dupuy is consulted with and called upon regularly by American press on Haitian issues.



# Khari Edwards

An advocate for the needs of others

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

United States, of parents from Trinidad (mother) and Guyana (father).

**OCCUPATION:**

Vice President of External Affairs, Brookdale Hospital and Medical Center; Behind the scenes work for elected officials, non-profit organizations, and city agencies in New York City and state politics and community development.

**MOTTO:**

“If you are able to reach one, you have succeeded ... then let us each reach one!”

Brooklyn-born Kari Edwards is the son of immigrants from Trinidad and Guyana. He is vice president of External Affairs at Brookdale Hospital & Medical Center, the first vice president of color in the history of the medical center.

For nearly 17 years, Khari Edwards has led a vast career in politics and community development throughout New York City and State. He helps bridge the gap between members of the community, business leaders, public unions and others to ensure everyone’s voice is heard.

“I fell into this career by accident,” he explains. “I worked as special assistant for New York State Senate Leader John Sampson, put in charge of the Brooklyn Health crisis taskforce, helping restructure Brooklyn’s hospital system.”

After that, he was asked to work in the field — Brookdale Hospital — where he has been ever since.

Edwards is the first vice president of color in the history of Brookdale.

Edwards served as a field representative for former Congressman Major Owens, special assistant to former Comptroller Carl McCall,

community liaison for former Assemblyman Roger Green, and city-wide program manager for the New York City Housing Authority where he facilitated youth programs for local community centers.

Recently, for students in schools near Brookdale, he created “It Starts Here,” a program against community gun violence.

Through tours of the morgue, the trauma department, and personal stories, students are exposed to effects of gun violence on the victim, the community, and more.

His “Pick ‘N’ Roll” program provides community members opportunities to learn and participate in basketball.

“My parents instilled in me all the tools needed to be an advocate for the needs of others to find the positive in every person,” he says.



# Feet of Rhythm

## Nadia Dieudonné & Cynthia Karaha

### BIO FILE

**HOME COUNTRY:**

**Nadia:** United States, of parents from Haiti.  
**Cynthia:** Haiti.

**OCCUPATIONS:**

**Nadia:** Dancer, choreographer, teacher  
**Cynthia:** Founder, World Music Promotions, apparel designer

**QUOTE:**

"The greatness of a man is not in how much wealth he acquires, but in his integrity and his ability to affect those around him positively."

— Bob Marley

### Duo transforms kids with Haitian pride

Nadia Dieudonné and Cynthia Karaha are cultural sisters, a complementary duo. They are the heart and soul of Feet of Rhythm (F.O.R.) for youth who are, so far, the only troupe to represent the Haitian community in the West Indian Day Junior Carnival Parade.

F.O.R. was founded as a dance group in 1995, and began to participate in the children's carnival in 2001.

Dieudonné is the artistic director, choreographer and dance teacher. Karaha is the troupe's co-director, manager and visual director who designs and oversees the production of the unusual parade costumes.

Apparel designer Karaha has been designing clothes since she was a child in Haiti. She is also an artist manager, music promoter and founder of World Music Promotions.

Dieudonné has been dancing and teaching dance for years.

After her 2000 choreography collaboration with the Trinidadian Cage Productions mas camp, she teamed up with Karaha for a Haitian

children's presence in the Junior Carnival.

After recruiting the dancers — this year's ages were 6 to 17 — Dieudonné teaches up to 10 free dance classes in order that the troupe learns the choreography. By parade time, "they feel confident, know their routines and have made friends," Dieudonné observes.

As for the greatest joy? "It's the smiles on the children when they're in make-up and costumes," beams Dieudonné. "Filled with such pride, they strut down the street, so happy to be participating in something just for them."

Karaha adds, "On that day they're announcing to the world their cultural heritage and celebrating being Haitian. At the end of the parade, they've been transformed by pride."



Nadia Dieudonné



Cynthia Karaha

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# Joan H. Grant-Boyd, Ph.D.

An educator who also takes care of the needy



**BIO FILE**

**BIRTHPLACE:**  
Spanish Town, Jamaica.

**OCCUPATION:**  
Doctoral lecturer, SUNY/BEOC under the auspices of New York City College of Technology; adjunct assistant professor, Medgar Evers and Queens College.

**QUOTE:**  
“The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night.”  
— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Born in Spanish Town, Jamaica, Dr. Joan H. Grant-Boyd’s father, who was a police officer, stressed education and ensured that all of his 11 children would receive an education while on his policeman’s salary supplemented by farming.

After earning a Diploma in Education in History and English from the University of the West Indies she migrated to the United States, where she earned her Master’s Degree in Curriculum and Teaching from Teachers College, Columbia.

She later earned a second Master’s Degree in English from Hunter College, and a Ph.D. in English from the City University of New York Graduate Center.

For the past 46 years, she has been a doctoral lecturer at SUNY / BEOC under the auspices of New York City College of Technology.

Dr. Grant-Boyd has also taught as an adjunct assistant professor at Medgar Evers and Queens College.

“I choose teaching because of two exemplary high school teachers (in Jamaica),” she says, noting Louis Austin Prescod, headmaster at Manning’s, who taught her Latin, particularly,

Virgil’s “Aeneid.”  
“He made that ancient classical text come alive for us country children and inculcated in me the beauty and elegance of this ancient language and an empathy for the heroic and tragic elements in that enduring work.”

Active in her Crown Heights community, Dr. Grant-Boyd served on the vestry at Church of St. Mark. Thirteen years ago with two other women, she started a food pantry there, which weekly serves 125 persons.

Dr. Grant-Boyd is president of the school board of the St. Mark’s Day School. Additionally, for several years she has been a judge of the NAACP ACT-SO coalition of New York Academic Olympics.

**Congratulations to**

# Jolander Headley

on receiving the

Caribbean Life Impact award 2016  
From Rev. Michael Bacchus and the  
Full Gospel Assembly congregation  
Well deserved!

FULL GOSPEL ASSEMBLY

# Sharon A. Haynes

An advocate for education

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

Kingston, Jamaica.

**OCCUPATION:**

Fifth-grade math teacher, PS 268, East Flatbush; Formerly consumer marketing for Essence Magazine; President, block association; Committee member, 67th Precinct for annual essay writing contest.

**QUOTE:**

"Discipline is the bridge between thought and accomplishments."  
— AR Bernard.

**MOTTO:**

"Success. Don't just wish for it, work for it."

Not only is Kingston, Jamaica,-born Sharon A. Haynes a completely dedicated teacher, she also is civically engaged, always advocating for education. Haynes migrated to Brooklyn as a teen.

Twelve years ago she said goodbye to the corporate world (Conde Nast, McGraw-Hill, and lastly consumer marketing at Essence Magazine) to follow her passion. She works diligently on behalf of her students.

Haynes teaches fifth-grade math at PS 268 in East Flatbush. "I always knew I had a calling to be an educator," she says, remembering being the teacher when playing school with her siblings. Also, memories of her seventh-grade teacher Ms. Purcy's wit, devotion, compassion and eagerness to motivate her students left an indelible impression on her.

Haynes is a teacher leader/model teacher for her school, motivating through life experiences, career day activities, and even alumni visits.

"I want to be a leader others want to follow," she said.

She is also community liaison and member of the principal's cabinet, working alongside

the principal to help in decisions concerning the school's welfare.

Beyond the classroom, Haynes helps students advance their academics and assists them with extracurricular projects of their interest such as music, dance and singing.

Living her philosophy as a teacher that "Our work should be impactful," she is also active in the community.

Haynes is also block association president and member of Community Board 17. She is a committee member with 67th Pct. annual essay writing contest and engages in many religious and other civic involvements.

Haynes holds a masters degree in early education from Brooklyn College and is currently pursuing administration credentials.



**Glory of God Christian Center**  
**Pastors Joseph & Fumni Williams**  
  
*congratulates*  
  
**Jolander Headley**  
  
*on receiving the*  
  
**Caribbean Life**  
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*Well Deserved!*

**LESLIE SPIGNER**  
  
*Congratulates*  
  
**JOLANDER**  
**HEADLEY**  
  
*on receiving the*  
  
**CARIBBEAN LIFE**  
**IMPACT AWARD**  
**2016**  
  
**WELL DESERVED!**

# Jolander Headley

Entrepreneur with a passion for the arts



**BIO FILE**

**BIRTHPLACE:**  
Trinidad.

**OCCUPATION**  
Licensed insurance broker; Producer; Client advocate and broker for a number of multinational energy, chemical, utility and financial companies; Founder, president, and CEO Joe's Music Store, Joe's Music Center & Performing Arts, Inc., specializing in music education.

**QUOTE**  
"To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart."  
— Eleanor Roosevelt

Born in Trinidad, Jolander Headley is a multi-faceted entrepreneur with 24 years of corporate experience in the United States. She found her calling in music education.

She is the founder, president and CEO of Joe's Music Store and Joe's Music Center & Performing Arts Inc., established in 1998, that specializes in music education.

"I have a passion for the arts, which are essential for success," says Headley. As a child, she pursued piano studies and music theory at Juilliard.

The academy is one of the largest privately owned arts schools in Queens and Brooklyn with more than 40 staff and thousands of alumni. It partners with New York City schools providing performing arts education, and also offers services to early childhood, youth, senior, adult and faith-based organizations.

Headley says, "Through the arts one learns the creative process and develops critical thinking — learning not covered in any other discipline. Our program bridges a gap for

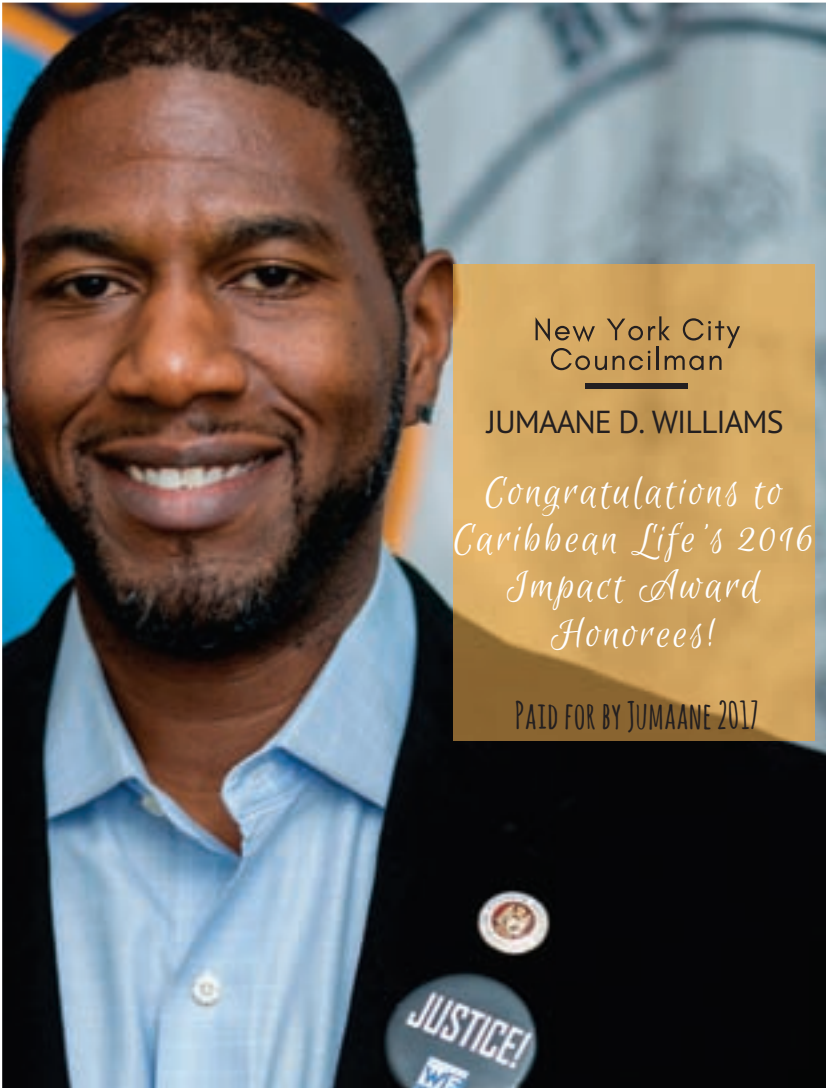
future leaders."

Believing that music lessons should be available to everyone, Headley co-founded the non-profit Major Music International Corporation that provides musical instruction to youth and senior citizens, regardless of their finances.

This entrepreneur is involved with numerous music professional organizations including The Grammy Foundation and The Recording Academy, the National Association of Negro Musicians B-Sharp branch, the National Association for Music Education, the National Association of Music Merchants, and the Southeast Queens Chamber of Commerce and the Farmers Boulevard Merchant Association.

Her greatest influence? Lawrence Berk, founder in 1945 of Schillinger House of Music — its name changed in 1970 to Berklee College of Music.

"Schillinger was the first U.S. school to teach jazz, the popular music of the era," she informs us.



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on receiving the  
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IMPACT AWARD 2016**  
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# Det. Roxanne Joseph

Born to serve her community

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

**OCCUPATION:**

NYPD Officer, Detective, 67th Precinct.

**QUOTE:**

"I've learned that people will forget what you said. People will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." — Maya Angelo

Roxanne Joseph was born in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Raised by her grandmother from the age of 4, she joined her mother in Brooklyn in her teens, and in was inspired to join the police force after watching her sergeant aunt.

In 2005, she was sworn into the New York City Police Department and assigned to the 67th Precinct impact unit. Patrolling East Flatbush streets, she was a member of the precinct's community policing unit.

Her expression of love for her culture and safety for the community subsequently earned her the position of community affairs officer.

This officer can not emphasize enough the impact of community affairs, "We mend the fence when it is broken."

Detective Joseph educates newly assigned precinct police officers on West Indian cultures and traditions.

She is also an advocate for guiding young women to be successful, productive and independent women in society.

Three vans of civilians attended the promotion ceremony when she made detective this past August.

Influencing her career choice, Joseph speaks of her aunt Sergeant Ilene Maloney who spent 30-plus years in the Royal St. Vincent Police Force, "Always wearing her uniform, I was so proud of her."

She adds, "My older cousin Ruth is a superintendent and first female head of the Central Investigation Division in St. Vincent."

Joseph thanks First Sergeant Mark Smith who trained her as a rookie and taught her to "always do what is right."

For her on-the-job excellence, Det. Joseph was named her precinct's 2015 Police Officer of the Year.

She is the recipient of the Woman of Distinction Award, Congressional Recognition from Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, and numerous other citations.

Detective Joseph is married with two children.



*...But let those who love Him be like the sun  
When it comes out in full strength.*

Judges 5:31(NKJV)



Dr. Iva Carruthers and The Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference congratulate

**Rev. Dr. Dionne Boissiere**  
as a recipient of the Caribbean Life Impact Award.

Like the prophet Deborah, her love for and faithfulness to our awesome God comes forth in full strength for service to the world.

# Lindiwe Kamau

Shares her love for the arts with the community

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

Trinidad.

**OCCUPATION:**

Verizon technician (retired); Owner and instructor, Expression in Ceramics; President of Nostrand Merchants Association.

**MOTTO:**

“To do always as much as I can, in order to leave my community more beautiful and beneficial than I inherited it.”  
— In the Spirit of the Kwanzaa Principle, Kuumba.

Lindiwe Kamau emigrated from Trinidad in 1971 to join her mother, and shortly after, the family moved into a house on Nostrand Avenue, where she still lives.

Kamau went to Pace University while working at New York Telephone Company. After graduation she continued working at the company but became tired of answering phones, so she took and passed the technician test.

She was transferred to the field and became part of the first crop of female technicians — three among 25 males — in this environment.

The women, regularly subjected to insults and intimidation, had bonded and were determined to stay with a weekly pay almost \$100 more and unlimited overtime opportunities.

Meanwhile, she practiced ceramic arts in her Nostrand basement studio that had a kiln.

After retiring from Verizon 12 years ago, she started the Expression in Ceramics business, holding classes for all ages, preschoolers and up, as well as “paint and carry” parties to create useable and decorative ceramics.

“I was inspired by my mother’s love for the arts,” she said.

The studio is a hub for creatives — knitters, crocheters, painters, and jewelry makers — to network and participate in holiday bazaars, and has inspired other arts stores to open. The NYC Small Business Services designated her business as a Community Cornerstone Business.

President of the Nostrand Merchants Association for 10 years, Kamau works with the merchants, the community, city agencies, government and public services.

She is an incredible resource for small businesses, particularly helping new ones hone and develop their ideas, and is also involved with assisting Trinidadian cultural organizations.

“I love Brooklyn, my adopted home, because of its incredible cultural diversity that has allowed me to maintain my Trini roots in a foreign land.”



# Michael Lambert

A supporter of community and small business

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

Jamaica.

**OCCUPATION:**

Executive director, Bedford-Stuyvesant Gateway Business Improvement District; Led ambulatory care programs for Montefiore Medical Center; Deputy director of the Mosholu Preservation Corporation.

**MOTTO:**

“No matter what you do in life, always do your best no matter what it is, because your reputation will follow you.” — Michael Lambert’s father, Lloyd Lambert

Michael Lambert came to the United States as a very young boy from Jamaica and now helps shape neighborhoods for the benefit of local residents and businesses.

He serves as executive director of the six-year-old Bedford-Stuyvesant Gateway Business Improvement District (BID), in one of Central Brooklyn’s busiest commercial thoroughfares — an eclectic mix of almost 400 businesses.

This culturally diverse area is situated amidst many landmark historic districts.

With years of managerial experience as a director of a health care program of the Children’s Hospital at Montefiore Medical Center, Lambert segued into economic development, an arena allowing him to shape entire neighborhoods for the benefit of those living, working, and visiting them.

Previously, he was executive director of the Jerome-Gun Hill BID and the deputy director of the Mosholu Preservation Corporation, which manages several community and economic development programs throughout the northwest Bronx.

Lambert is liaison to New York City agencies including the New York City Department

of Small Business Services and represents the BID with Bed-Stuy community organizations.

Under his purview, Lambert points to newly recreated local business networking; the annual holiday tree lighting event, now engaging hundreds of community residents and several community organizations; and a real estate committee to address needs of the area’s lower capacity property owners.

He respectfully recalls the significant influence of his late father from whom he learned the value of hard work and of supporting one’s local community and its small businesses.

Lambert also serves as the co-chair of the New York City BID Association (72 BID directors), co-chair of the Age Friendly Neighborhood Coalition in Bed-Stuy, and served as the co-chair of NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer’s Red Tape Commission to improve the city’s business community’s operating environment.



# Rev. Terry Lee

Acts as mediator between community and police

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

Cowley, Jamaica.

**OCCUPATION:**

Head, By Ways and Hedges Youth for Christ Ministry; Founder and president, Immigrant Responding to Crisis, an arm of the Community Concerns Network; Founder, Utica and Church Avenue Merchants Association.

**MOTTO:**

"Communities are one village where everyone works together toward empowerment."

Born and raised in Cowley, Jamaica, Rev. Terry Lee immigrated to New York in 1989. He travels the New York area giving spiritual awareness and comfort through his many programs.

Rev. Terry heads the By Ways and Hedges Youth for Christ Ministry. He sees the microphone as his sword and the bible as his shield.

He is the founder and president of Immigrant Responding to Crisis, an arm of the Community Concerns Network, which did considerable Hurricane Sandy relief.

Reverend Lee's vision lead him to network with local political and civic including the NYPD's 67th, 70th and 71st precincts, where he is a mediator between the community and the police department.

The intent of his Unity Walks is to bridge the gap between the two groups.

He often speaks to new recruits during their orientation and he was once selected as a "Police Inspector for a Day" to the Transit Department.

Rev. Terry led a pilgrimage to the White

House for prayer. He has conducted health and wellness seminars, distributed food and clothing to those in need.

Domestic violence and gang awareness programs are among his visions.

A member of CUSH — Churches United to Save and Heal — he is the only person with a Christian float on the Parkway during the West Indian Day Parade.

The reverend is also an active member of many civic organizations including CACCI, Community Board 17, Brooklyn Ecumenical Advisory Group, and Brownsville Academy High School.

He founded Utica and Church Avenue Merchants Association.

He also conducts his own awards programs to acknowledge volunteers who give their time and energy to help their communities.



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**Rev. Dionne Boissiere**  
Chaplain at Church Center for the United Nations

On her deserving recognition as  
a  
**2016 Caribbean American  
of Distinction**

# Rev. R. Simone Lord Marcelle

Transforming lives and communities



## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**  
Trinidad and Tobago.

**OCCUPATION:**  
Inspirational speaker; Author; Pastor, Peoples First Baptist Church; President and founder, Southeast Queens Chamber of Commerce.

**QUOTE**  
“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”  
— Philippians 4:13

Rev. R. Simone Lord Marcelle is a pastor born in Trinidad and Tobago and is building a vibrant community in southeast Queens.

With a Bachelor of Arts from Brooklyn College, she holds honorary doctorates in Ministry & Humanities.

For the past six years, she ministered at Peoples First Baptist Church.

Rev. Simone Lord Marcelle is the founder and president of the Southeast Queens Chamber of Commerce, which builds more vibrant businesses and safer, stronger communities in those Queens' neighborhoods.

She describes its work, “We sponsor small and big events, business card exchanges, and refer businesses.

Neighborhood beautifying projects include landscaping on Sutphin Boulevard and South Road, and colorful street poles' banners to instill pride.”

Previously Rev. Lord Marcelle had opened the non-profit Royal People Group Community Learning Center that held adult classes and tutoring for children.

With her husband Martin Marcelle, she founded The ICAN Network, a global television

ministry helping pastors, leaders and business people worldwide reach people internationally and affect changes in the condition of their lives.

The latest of her four authored books is “Get Out of Your Cage, Keys to Freedom.”

She says, “I am proud to be able to work for and serve the Lord, helping transform lives and communities by addressing and improving quality-of-life issues for many.”

“Meeting President Barack Obama made an impact in my career,” she said. Being able to meet him and Michelle Obama through Around Town magazine, which she started, gave her courage to keep going forward.

“You never know how far you will get when you use your faith to live out your dreams,” she says.

She is currently completing her doctorate degree in naturopathic medicine.

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# JOLANDER HEADLEY

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*Sharon we are so proud of you.  
We were always aware of your  
humanitarian abilities, now the rest  
of the world knows it too.  
This award is so fitting and so  
well deserved. Continue being you.  
We love you very much*

*Your Mom, Daughter, Brothers,  
Sister, Nieces and Nephew*

# Judith Lovell

Her passion is guiding students to success

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

United States, of parents from Trinidad (father) and Jamaica (mother).

**OCCUPATION:**

MetroCard Operations, Customer Relations, and Corporate Communications for the MTA New York City Transit; Business courses instructor.

**QUOTE:**

"Everything influences each of us, and because of that I try to make sure that my experiences are positive."

—Maya Angelou

Brooklyn-born Judith Lovell's father hailed from Trinidad and her mom's parents came from Jamaica. A career in the MTA led to teaching business, and she is also a published poet.

This Brooklynite embodies a deep commitment to community and civic engagement, devoting a lifetime since she was 17 to civic and volunteer activities.

Recently, she has embraced the written word and teaching.

Holding degrees in Urban Planning and Public Administration and certificates in Management and Labor Relations, her MTA New York City Transit career spans more than 20 years.

Additionally, she worked with business ventures in advertising, real estate sales, public relations and marketing research.

These accumulated experiences have led her to teach various business courses at St. Joseph's College and at ASA College in the Department of Business.

"Sharing my love of learning and my passion for guiding students to success is the highlight of my day," she says of this calling.

As a published poet, Judith Lovell writes

enlightening skits and plays. Her four-part "Papa's Letters" series focuses on her grandparents' love letters from Jamaica to Brooklyn starting in 1913. This work has expanded into her first book, "Papa's Letters: Love via First Class Male."

This mother of two and grandmother of two lovingly acknowledges her father Milton M. Lovell's impact on her.

"He was a meticulous man of integrity who truly enjoyed his career path and courageously stood up for justice and fairness in the workplace," she says.

Judith Lovell is the recipient of numerous awards including the Shakespeare Trophy of Excellence from the Famous Poets Society, the Exemplary 20 Years of Service Award from NYC Transit.

She is included in the 2013 edition of the Covington Who's Who Registry of Executives and Professionals.



# E. Wayne McDonald

Director of Caribbean cultural events

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

Jamaica.

**OCCUPATION:**

Actor; Theatre director; Founder and director, Caribbean Cultural Theatre; Founder and curator, Poets and Passions Literary Series.

**OBSERVATION:**

The Caribbean in the truest sense does not exist; it's a shifting sand, the people come from literally the entire world.

E. Wayne McDonald emigrated from Jamaica to New York on the eve of his 21st birthday and now stages major Caribbean authors at his Brooklyn-based arts program.

With humor and passion, he toils away on the work of Caribbean Cultural Theatre (CCT), the Brooklyn-based multi-arts program organization he founded and directs.

Without a steady revenue stream, he manages to stage major Caribbean authors. He is the founder and curator of the "Poets and Passions" literary series, which has presented more than 100 emerging and celebrated Caribbean writers over its 10-year history.

CCT also hosts a Caribbean film series and stages plays.

In his work, E. Wayne struggles to showcase a balance of voices from all the Caribbean populations.

E. Wayne is also the artist in residence at the Caribbean Research Center, Medgar Evers College (CUNY).

Having studied at the Jamaica School of Drama, the Lincoln Center Directors Lab, E. Wayne holds a Master of Arts degree from the New York Institute of Technology.

During three decades as a theatre profes-

sional, he has mounted works that probe Caribbean realities, not just celebrating, but also challenging them.

He has directed productions in Jamaican patois, English, and French.

Credits include Godfrey Sealy's treatise on HIV / AIDS "One of Our Sons is Missing" and Glenville Lovell's immigration comedy "Lovers."

For directing Athol Fugard's Apartheid-era drama "My Children! My Africa!," he earned an Outstanding Director nomination from the AUDELCO Awards for Excellence in Black Theater.

In 2014, E. Wayne directed "Pantomime" by Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott in Brooklyn, with the playwright in attendance.

Frequently, E. Wayne is master of ceremonies at public Caribbean events. He is known for his off-beat sense of humor.



# Damian R. McIntosh

Making a positive difference in the community

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

Guyana.

**OCCUPATION:**

Regional leader, Primerica, Inc.; Senior operations administrator, FedEx Ground; Volunteer minister and assistant director, God's Battalion of Prayer Church.

**MOTTO:**

"Preparation plus opportunity equals success."

Guyana-born Damian R. McIntosh migrated to the United States with his parents in 1994. A consummate entrepreneur and community activist, he is an ardent people person with a trained eye that identifies undeveloped talent. "I am passionate about making a positive difference in the community," he said.

McIntosh is a regional leader with the financial services company Primerica, Inc. with whom he has been providing financial solutions for families and businesses in New York, Maryland, and Pennsylvania for the past 10 years.

McIntosh organizes motivational seminars, financial literacy workshops, and private financial coaching sessions to help the earning potential of those who run schools and churches, business owners and the public at large.

To further broaden the plethora of community services, he produces and hosts the Damian McIntosh Show, which airs Saturdays at 10:30 pm on BCAT.

The show highlights individuals who significantly impact the community — its intent is to inspire. McIntosh has interviewed state Sen. Kevin Parker; founder of the Caribbean

American Cultural Group Yvonne Peters; Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, and local beauty pageant winners, among others. He is also an anchor with Caribbean Heritage TV, which covers major events in the community.

Weekly, he serves as an ordained minister and an assistant director of stewardship at God's Battalion of Prayer Church in Brooklyn under the leadership of Bishop, Dr. Alfred S. Cockfield.

"James Kocher, my business mentor, is the most influential person in my current career," McIntosh said, adding, "His life exemplifies the principles he teaches. James demonstrates a deep devotion to his family. He is solid in his faith and his business practices are sound and ethical."



# Marlon Peterson

A national social and criminal justice advocate

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

United States, of parents from Trinidad and Tobago.

**OCCUPATION:**

Criminal justice advocate; Writer, Organizational trainer, Founder and chief, Precedential Group; Social justice consulting firm; TED resident; Soros Justice Fellow.

**QUOTE:**

"The function of freedom is to free someone else." — Toni Morrison

Marlon Peterson is an example of someone who made mistakes, turned his life around, and is now completely devoted to helping others in similar situations prevent and break a crime-prison cycle.

Peterson spent 10 years, his entire 20s, in New York State prisons for his involvement in a crime as a teenager.

During that time he did his associate degree online, with honors, in criminal justice.

Born in Brooklyn from a Trinidadian family, Marlon Peterson is now a national social and criminal justice advocate, writer, organizational trainer, community organizer, and educator. He earned a B.S. from NYU in organizational behavior.

During the last five years of his incarceration he created programming and curricula for men nearing release from incarceration, heading up The Transitional Services Center, which he created.

Since his release in 2009, he has held several non-profit positions working with The Fortune Society, Crown Heights Community Mediation Center, Youth Organizing to Save

Our Streets, How Our Lives Link Altogether (H.O.L.L.A.).

Peterson is the founder and chief re-imaginer of the social justice consulting firm The Precedential Group.

He is 2015 Soros Justice Fellow, Aspen Ideas Festival Scholar, a 2015 Ebony Magazine Power 100 honoree, and TED resident.

"I am a product of tough experiences," he reveals. "I care about sharing truths and empowering folks from the communities I come from. I promised folks in prison I would be truthful and impactful, so I try my best to fulfill that promise."

Outside of Malcom X, he attributes Dr. Nadia Lopez as having the most influence on his career, "While I was in prison, she exposed me to possibilities I never saw for myself."



# Pastor Anthony Quintyne

Always on call to help those in need

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

Barbados.

**OCCUPATION:**

Grassroots minister and "In-the-Field" counselor; Substance abuse counselor; Founder and pastor, Enduring Faith Ministries.

**MOTTO:**

"Forever forward, never backward."

Pastor Anthony Quintyne was born in Barbados. He uses 'out-of-the-box' methods of being there to counsel his growing flock.

Ordained by Assemblies of God in 2009, Pastor Quintyne started the non-denominational Enduring Faith Ministries — a small group meeting in a living room.

Crystal Manor now holds his intimate, growing assemblage of 50, and his wife Susan's award-winning voice leads psalms during the weekly Sunday morning service.

Pastor Anthony Quintyne counsels members, performs pastoral ceremonies and rites and oversees a grassroots ministry.

"I work completely 'out of the box' using untraditional methods of being a counselor," he said. He might counsel people in a convenient diner or even on FaceTime.

In his pre-marital counseling, he stresses issues of finances, looking beneath the surface at the future spouse, and what faith the couple might want to follow.

He might meet one-to-one with a teen struggling with alcohol or drug abuse.

Pastor Quintyne's relationship with his

grandmother impacted him greatly.

"After making many wrong choices in her life, she had a conversion experience," he said.

"She had passion for the word of God and desire to teach, preach and encourage the younger generation not to make the same mistakes she made as a girl. Without a formal education, she completed her studies in theology and planted a church in Brooklyn, never looking back."

A volunteer pastor at Jewish Institute for Healthcare & Rehabilitation, recently he provided counsel and comfort visiting a Jewish home with a spouse with dementia.

Pastor Quintyne actively seeks to meet the physical and emotional needs of individuals and families.

He is a member of the New York State Chaplain Task Force, an on-call member of the clergy for emergency situations.



Congratulations to  
*Rev Dionne Boissiere*

on receiving the

**Caribbean Life  
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*We are very proud of you Dee!*

From

**Mom & Dad,  
Lynette & Erwin Boissiere**

**Congratulations  
Jolander Headley**

CEO of Joe's Music  
Center and Dance  
Academy



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# Cindy Similien-Johnson

Transforms community and self



**BIO FILE**

**BIRTHPLACE:**

United States, of parents from Haiti.

**OCCUPATION:**

Author; Newspaper columnist, publisher, founder — Goal Chic, Women's Empowerment Organization.

**MOTTO:**

"Never, ever give up."

Haitian-American Cindy Similien-Johnson lives by the words: 'When you transform your community, you also transform yourself.'

Similien-Johnson founded Goal Chic, a mentoring organization whose mission is to inspire, encourage, and empower women and girls.

Through workshops and afterschool programs, she helps them be productive in their careers, finances, health and wellness, and relationships.

The first Goal Chic empowerment conference was held in May in Brooklyn. Recently, this social entrepreneur won the \$3,000 prize, second place for Goal Chic from the PowerUp! Kreyol start-up competition.

Similien-Johnson graduated Barnard College of Columbia University.

The author of several books including "How to Stay Motivated: Inspiration and Advice for Everyday Living," and "Goal Chic: Changing the World, One Goal at a Time," Similien-Johnson founded CSJ Media Publishing to share messages of inspiration.

Her e-cookbook series and cooking class, Cook Like a Haitian, provides an introduction

to Haiti's cuisine and culture, and keeps her connected to her roots.

As a board member of the United Nations Association-Brooklyn Chapter, she brings awareness to global issues of climate change, gender inequality, and child hunger.

Featured in many publications, she is the recipient of numerous awards including Star Network's 2016 40 Stars Under Forty and this year she was invited as a changemaker at the inaugural United State of Women Summit convened by the White House.

With core values of faith, women empowerment, and cultural identity, she acknowledges the influence of family, friends and mentors.

She says, "I stand on the shoulders of those who sacrificed and struggled to give me access to opportunities so that I can have a better quality of life."



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# Andrew Walcott

Restaurateur fulfills community needs

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

Montreal, Canada but raised here in Brooklyn, of parents from Barbados.

**OCCUPATION:**

Attorney, CPA, Founder and restaurant entrepreneur, Fusion East, Brooklyn

**MOTTO:**

“Attention to detail.”

Andrew Walcott, son of hard-working immigrants from Barbados, grew up in rough-and-tumble Brooklyn. He always strived to take advantage to opportunities America offered and now brings a taste of the Caribbean to Brooklyn.

He served in the Air Force and now continues to serve through his upscale Caribbean and soul food restaurant — Fusion, which seats 72 and even has a small stage.

Located in the Gateway Estates of East New York, next to Gateway Center Mall, Walcott recognized the hassle for the local population of traveling to eat familiar food in an upscale environment.

The eatery has been called the first “modern chic” restaurant in the neighborhood.

A corporate attorney and certified public accountant, Walcott identified a need in the community where he lived most of his life.

His restaurant is the intersection of opportunity and desire to have his own business.

The menu is inspired by the surrounding community demographics — Caribbean- and

African-American.

“It doesn’t matter if you are from Aruba or Alabama, you will find something on the menu that your mother used to make,” Walcott opines.

The restaurant blends some standard Caribbean and soul food meals such as oxtail, rice and peas and collard greens, as well as serving chicken and coconut waffles.

He adds, “We are always searching for ways to blend the two cultures into one.”

“Neither of my parents went to college,” Walcott reveals. “Both my brother and I attained advanced degrees and have had success in our respective careers.”

“I am most proud of the fact that my family immigrated to America without a penny to their name and we were still able to achieve some measure of the American dream.”



# Rawlston Williams

Vincentian chef pleases all at his ‘Food Sermon’

## BIO FILE

**BIRTHPLACE:**

St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

**OCCUPATION:**

Chef and owner, The Food Sermon, Crown Heights.

**MOTTO:**

“The way you live, the way you carry yourself, the way everyone sees you, it’s your sermon. My message is food.”

“God gives us little crumbs. When you want to give up, he gives us different crumbs to motivate you.”

Born in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, raised in Brooklyn, and trained at the French Culinary Institute, Chef Rawlston Williams offers an elevated, forward-thinking take on Caribbean classics in Crown Heights, a unique approach influenced by the chef’s worldly background and free-spirited life experiences.

After immigrating to New York at 10 years old and living in East Flatbush, Chef Williams studied theology at Oakwood University in Alabama, a private Seventh-day Adventist Church university.

Faith still plays a large role in his life, but he found another calling in the kitchen. After graduating from New York’s French Culinary Institute — now the International Culinary Center — Williams opened the first Food Sermon location in 2015.

Originally intended to be a small outpost for a catering business, the pint-sized restaurant quickly attracted followers and drew attention of food critics.

The New York Times praised Williams’s “gift for meat” and “extraordinary brightness of flavors.”

Williams’s innovative approach features creative takes on traditional Caribbean standards. His signature Island Bowls present mouth-watering savory stewed meats swimming in coconut-ginger or spicy tomato sauces.

Inspired by an array of cultures, cuisines and techniques, Williams’s goal is to nourish and please. The name “Food Sermon” speaks to this mission.

Williams recalls, “My Aunt Gloria Farrel is the most impactful individual in my career. Often sick and bedridden, she taught me how to cook in preparation for the Sabbath, many times from her sick bed. At 5 and 6 years of age, I was her arms and legs when she was unable to be in the kitchen.”

Located in Crown Heights, the “Food Sermon” gets a very high rating from Yelp.



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*Thursday, November 17, 2016*

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