

The New York Women's Foundation

Activist Philanthropist





Ana L. Oliveira (NYWF President & CEO), Margarita Rosa (Executive Director of National Center for Law & Economic Justice), Susan Leicher (Report Author), Cidra M. Sebastien (Associate Executive Director of Brotherhood/Sister Sol), Amanda Kraus (Founder & Executive Director of Row NY), and Dr. Angela Diaz (Director of Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center) at the Report Release and Panel Discussion on our new *Voices from the Field* report Blueprint for Investing in Girls and Young Women.



Blue note saxophonist, George Braith, performing at NYWF's Neighborhood Dinner in Staten Island at Wagner College.



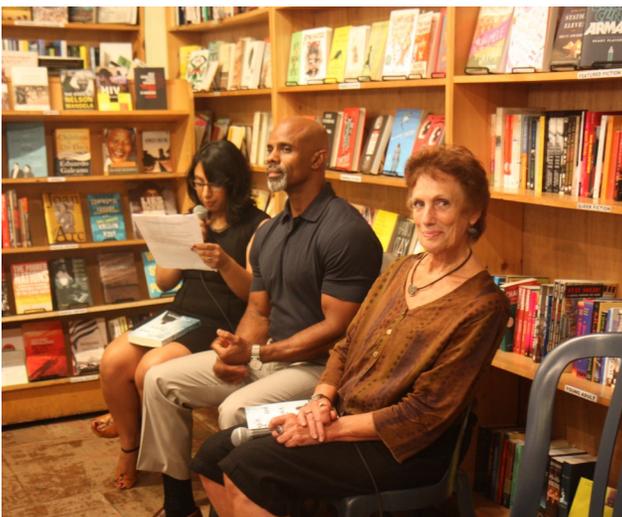
2015 Neighborhood Dinner award recipients Zeinab Eyega (Executive Director of Sauti Yetu), Maria Morales, & Diane Arneith (Executive Director of CHASI) at Wagner College in Staten Island.



Leah Hunt-Hendrix (Co-Founder/ Director of Solidaire) & Helen LaKelly Hunt (Founder & President of The Sister Fund; Founder & Chair Emerita of NYWF) at the Le Cirque Luncheon.



2015 Neighborhood Dinner award recipient Rev. Dr. Terry Troia with Rini Banerjee at Wagner College in Staten Island.



Debjani Roy (Deputy Director at Hollaback!), Ted Bunch (Co-Founder & Co-Director of A CALL TO MEN), and Ellen Bravo (feminist activist and author) at Bluestockings Bookstore for our event *Again and Again: Ending Sexual Violence Against Women*.



Jean Shafiroff (NYWF Board Member), Anne E. Delaney (NYWF Board Chair), Joyce Cowin (NYWF Board Alumna), Ana L. Oliveira (NYWF President & CEO), Soledad O'Brien and Leah Hunt-Hendrix at NYWF's Le Cirque Luncheon.

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Welcome

We are delighted to introduce you to the *Activist Philanthropist*, an e-zine that expresses our philanthropic practice at The New York Women's Foundation. Active philanthropy is action and engagement. This online publication showcases the work of our grantee partners, and the many individuals and organizers who are changing conditions in New York City so that it becomes an equitable city for *all* New Yorkers.

The *Activist Philanthropist* is a forum that celebrates those who embody philanthropy in action. The profiles and Q&A pieces in the e-zine spotlight community leaders and visionaries. The feature stories reveal the scope, breadth and depth of our vision in practice through the efforts of our diverse partners. On these pages, we share with you the inspiring transformation happening in lives and communities through the collective work of activist philanthropists—those who give generously of their time, their talent and their resources.

By diving in, and palpably engaging in the work of changing lives and communities, we build vital links and connections. Our lives are, in truth, connected and communal. Active philanthropy is transformative.

It is in this spirit of joining together to

create change that we launch our e-zine— an inclusive and vibrant space to collaborate and inspire; to celebrate the work we accomplish together, and to identify areas where energy, talent and resources are needed. The *Activist Philanthropist* encourages an understanding of philanthropy that is broader in scope; it advocates a participatory, democratic philanthropy.

At The Foundation we are lucky to experience philanthropy in action every single day. Our supporters join our committees—Grants Advisory Committee; Circle of Sisters for Social Change; Committee for the Future, and the Corporate Leadership Committee—or participate in specific projects and events. The *Activist Philanthropist* opens this vista to you, and invites you to join in.

Active, engaged and effective, together we can create a city that works for all.

Welcome to our inaugural issue!

Warm regards,



Ana L. Oliveira

President & CEO of The New York Women's Foundation

In Depth:

Staunching the Flow of Homelessness at the Source: Supporting Girls Aging Out of Foster Care

BY SUSAN LEICHER

In recent weeks, the media have focused a strong spotlight on the issue of street homelessness.

The situation of those who sleep in our city's doorways is undeniably tragic and requires swift and strategic attention. But we cannot let the vivid visuals of street homelessness steer all attention away from the larger issue of family homelessness. For, in fact, most homeless New Yorkers – nearly 80% of the total – are not individual men or women. They are mothers with young children.

It is easy for homeless mothers to remain invisible. Most spend their nights in the temporary quarters of the City's municipal shelter systems. Most spend their days in unremarkable pursuits – looking for work, seeking permanent housing, transporting children to and from school. But the plight of those mothers is no less acute than that of the people living on the streets. They contend with constant danger, stigma

and instability. Their children may never have known anything else.

What can we do? The harsh reality is that it may be impossible to address all the complicated root causes of homelessness – whether they involve mental illness or domestic violence, lack of living-wage jobs or a real estate market prone to seemingly limitless price increases. Similarly, we will probably never be able to rehouse every one of the nearly 60,000 New Yorkers who currently live in the shelter system or on the streets. There are strong reasons why homelessness, in all its iterations, has been such an intractable issue for so long.

We can, however, make a dent in the future scope of the crisis by better addressing one of its major feeders at its source. In particular, we can offer stronger assistance to the few hundred 18-year-old girls who exit the foster care system each year with little in their pockets beyond a Metrocard.

Experts in the field invariably mention the powerful direct connections between the foster care and shelter systems. They stress that more than 30% of youth exiting the child welfare system enter a homeless shelter within three years and that nearly 40% of shelter residents report having spent at least some time in foster care.

some time in foster care.

They ask how we can possibly expect a teenager whose life has been predominantly shaped by trauma and disruption to achieve long-term stability with few skills, a negligible employment track record, and no solid housing or back-ups in place. They ask just how many of us could have negotiated the rocky period between 18 and 24 without some form of sturdy transitional assistance – whether college, the military or simply a family willing to let us live at home until we got on our feet.

A few impressive service programs offer strategies for reinforcing the long-term chance of stability for girls at the highest risk of evolving into homeless mothers. Probably the best known of those programs is the **Chelsea Foyer at the Christopher** – a collaborative effort between **Good Shepherd Services** (a family and youth development agency) and **Common Ground** (a supportive housing developer).

At any given time, the **Foyer** provides trauma-informed supportive housing to 40 homeless young people, age 18-24. A solid segment of those residents are young women who have aged out of foster care. Residents must work or participate in school or training programs, honor mental health and other service appointments and participate in support groups. They must maintain

certain standards of behavior and pay 30% of their incomes towards program costs. Once they finish the program, those payments are returned to them in full.

The program has an exceptionally strong track record. A majority of residents move on to independent living within the prescribed two-year timeframe. It is also not inexpensive. Nonetheless, the costs of providing participants with this critical initial boost are considerably lower than those of supporting their future shelter stays over indefinite or repeated periods.

We have a choice. We can invest more into programs that give NYC's most vulnerable young women a viable foundation on which to build stability. Or we can ask those young women – and their future children and society at large – to pay far higher prices later on.

Philanthropy In Action

A Conversation about Active Philanthropy with Mary Caracappa

BY HUMERA AFRIDI



Lifelong resident of Staten Island, Mary Caracappa is Managing Director at Morgan Stanley, where she has worked for 29 years, and Co-Chair of The New York Women's Foundation's neighborhood dinner in Staten Island. Mary is an activist philanthropist, serving on several boards including the Women's Bond Club, Wagner College and Village Care. We spoke to her about the inspiration that drew her to philanthropy and what exactly it means to be an activist philanthropist.

Q: To be a philanthropist is to look beyond the sphere of one's own personal life and be an agent of change in the world. How did you get involved with philanthropy?

A: I'm the oldest of 7 kids. My father had his own business but he was sick a lot of his adult life. My parents had a lot of hardship with his health issues, trying to run a business, and

have a big family. Yet growing up, I saw that they were the people that others came to with all of their problems—for direction, encouragement and, sometimes, funding. I watched my parents and how many things they were dealing with. Yet they always found time for everyone else, and embodied the spirit of “How can I help?”

Q: What do you think is the secret to that spirit of generosity?

A: My parents married early, had all these kids. They were dealing with family stuff in addition to a serious illness. In a situation like that you realize you have to rely on each other and be there for each other.

Q: What causes are you drawn to?

A: One of the organizations I'm involved with is Village Care. They started at the height of the Aids crisis in the Village to support the Aids and geriatric community. It was a time when even hospitals wouldn't allow in Aids patients. They still serve the Aids community, in all five boroughs today, but they're growing and becoming involved with the underserved geriatrics community.

This resonates with me because when my dad was sick I saw all these elderly people in hospital with nobody to help support them. My dad was lucky because he had a big family around him through his illness. But in the bed next to him, there'd be an old man with no family at all, just alone. It was heartbreaking.

I joined the Women's Bond Club about 7 years ago and became the co-president 4 years ago. We do philanthropy as part of that program, providing scholarships to high-potential high school girls who just don't have the financial means and the support to get to college.

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And last year, I ended up joining the board of Wagner College. One of the main reasons I did so is that the college has a center for leadership and community engagement, really connecting teaching and learning with public work within our broader community.

Q: The causes you espouse are rooted in your experiences or memories of certain life events. Can you say more about this?

A: You see this commonly with a lot of people who get involved with philanthropy. It starts at the roots of how they grew up. My father went to Brooklyn Tech. He was very smart but his parents couldn't afford to send him to college—he went to work right away. So when we were growing up education was really important. My parents' goal was to see their kids go to college.

Every June, when the Women's Bond Club gives out their scholarships, all the families come with their girls. The pride that they have! You see them in that room with tears in their eyes. It just chokes me up. Many don't speak English, or have any idea how to support their girls, or have insight into how to even get them into college. We not only give out scholarships, but we mentor the young women through their college years, and provide internships. When they graduate, we work with our firms to place them. The trajectory is there for them to be the very first ones in their families to have a successful education and career. It's how I felt when I was their age going to college!

Q: How do the high school girls get connected with your program?

A: We have a committee that works with a lot of the New York City schools. We've built relationships with the principals and guidance counselors. We're trying to find girls who want to have a career in the financial services indus-

try. There are certain girls who are getting offers with full scholarship from every Ivy League school. But there's a level of girls right below these girls who have just as much potential, and this is whom we really target.

Q: Education and young women's education, in particular, then is a cause especially close to your heart.

A: I've been a very fortunate person. You look back on your life and you see how people have put themselves out to give you opportunity. That's something that's really driven me to get more and more involved in education. I feel a responsibility to give back for all that people did for me.

That's how I got involved with Wagner where I did my undergrad. Growing up in Staten Island there weren't many role models for a big professional career. So, when people come back and talk and give you a look into what isn't even in your purview, it changes everything! I had that when I was their age. I want to do that now for them.

Q: Apart from your parents, who else has influenced you as a philanthropist?

There have been so many people! But one of my early mentors, Eileen Murray, who is now the co-CEO of the hedge fund Bridgewater Associates, had a similar life background to me. She always made time for people, especially the 'underdog'—the people who needed a little more support and encouragement. I learned a lot from her. It's so easy to make the time. A lot of people think it's just not possible, I don't understand it. How hard is it to give someone 5 minutes to talk, supporting them or encouraging them when they're struggling, whether in their career or on a personal level?

There's nothing better or more satisfying than seeing somebody you made time for get to the next step in their life, feel better, or

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get over a hardship. You get it back in so many ways. I'm a big believer in karma!

Q: What is the antidote to those trying days that each of us inevitably faces at some point?

A: One of the things I've found so satisfying in my professional career is how women who are trying to raise families have supported each other to get through those years. Some days you're trying to deliver what you have to for work while your life is falling apart in the background! The philosophy I've adopted is you can't be good at everything everyday. You're going to get it wrong sometimes!

Q: In addition to all that you're doing, you co-chaired the NYWF Neighborhood Dinner in Staten Island. What was the inspiration for this decision?

You know, I'm somebody who just likes to have a lot on my plate! But it's also that there are a lot of stereotypes about Staten Island. My hope was that when people came over for the dinner they'd see that Staten Island has a lot to offer. It's a really vibrant community.

I feel Wagner and The Foundation have such aligned missions. They were perfect partners for the dinner. It was really exciting watching the event come together, and witnessing the energy on both sides!

Q: Our readers would love to know the secret to how you manage your personal, professional and philanthropic commitments with such a high standard of excellence and with such great success!

A: I've learned a lot from people who've been through extreme hardship. There's so

much grace that many of them have about how they live their lives. In my life, organization and prioritization are key. If you come to my house on Saturday, you'll see post-it notes on everyone's door! I do the same to myself.

I've been at Morgan Stanley for 29 years. One of the things I have to offer is my network, putting people together. A lot of what I've done at Morgan Stanley is process re-engineering. And one of the things you have to deal with in that is that while the project may take two years to complete, you have to focus on the smaller building blocks that you need to get done each day to get to the end. That's just the way I look at things. You can't get overwhelmed by the big task. You take the steps, and stay on track with the steps, and walk in the direction of the completion of the big picture. I focus on what I have to do today to achieve that success in the future. And, honestly, you have to let go of certain things. I tell my team you'll never get your whole to-do list done!

Q: A philanthropist is one who has an ideal vision that they're working to help realize. If you were given a magic wand, what would you change?

A: There's so much! Living in New York City it's hard because there is so much imbalance and income inequality. And yet, I think we've made a lot of progress on social issues in the last couple of years, for instance, on gay rights. The best way I can be part of solving the hard problems is not just by writing a check—that's only part of it—but what piece can I actually take on. There's the financial part, the activist part, the social part.

Q: Is this then how you would describe an activist philanthropist?

A: For a millionaire, it's easy to write a check. But what I've seen is that people give their

hearts to the organizations they support. They give all of their skills. I found that with the Women's Bond Club. When we started working with the high school students, we all got so engaged with trying to find any resources we could to ensure the girls' success. It's not so hard for us because we have the means. And we also have the influence.

You have to use your power and your influence, too. And I'm realizing that more and more as I get further involved with philanthropy. If you're lucky enough to have power and influence, that's just as important as the dollars. There are calls I can make that will make things move. Those are transferable skills that you learn from your professional career. You don't achieve this level of success without power and influence. And now you channel that into other disciplines and into not-for-profit organizations.

Q: Are you hopeful about the future and the pace of change towards a more equitable, caring society?

A: What I'm seeing and am excited about is the millennial generation, a generation coming up really fast into a position of power and influence, who from a young age have been philanthropic in their thinking. They want to be engaged in community work all along their life. And they're pushing corporate America to do community work.

At Morgan Stanley we made our mandate to support children's health.

The children's wing at Columbia Presbyterian is funded by that. We have an annual volunteer month when everyone is encouraged to go out and volunteer on company time. People love it because they have causes they support and can engage the company as well.

Social media has empowered a lot of people to have influence that they wouldn't have had. I have a lot of hope with the next generation in driving that change!

Triumph of Courage and Hope: A Woman Activist's Journey Beyond the Arab Spring

By HUMERA AFRIDI



For Hend Nafea, a young Egyptian woman activist who played a daring role in the protests in Tahrir Square, hope is vibrantly alive—even if justice is still elusive. Nafea was sentenced to life in prison for her activism during the uprisings in Cairo. She has been living in exile in Lebanon, cut-off from family.

Hend Nafea is also the central character of the riveting feature documentary, *The Trials of Spring*, which premiered at the 2015 Human Rights Film Festival on June 12, at the Film Society of Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater. *The Trials of Spring*, a multimedia documentary project chronicles the stories of nine women who played active roles in the Arab Spring uprisings and their aftermath in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. Created by Oscar Nominated Gini Reticker and Abigail Disney—the team behind the award-winning documentary, *Pray the Devil back to Hell*, and Executive Producers of the PBS special series, *Women, War and Peace*—*The Trials of Spring* is comprised of six short films, articles by award-winning journalists, a social media conversation about women and their quest for social justice and freedom, and a

and a feature-length documentary.

“The feature film focuses on Egypt and specifically Hend’s story because the charges against her followed from one regime to the next,” said producer Beth Levison at a panel. Also present in the panel, to the surprise—and relief—of the audience, was Nafea herself. In the documentary, we follow her journey from a rural village to downtown Cairo, where she is inspired to add her voice to the thousands demanding the end of decades-long military rule. Emboldened by the ecstatic optimism of the early days of revolution, Nafea is certain that change in her country is imminent. Alas, it is not to be. The macabre turn from hope to shattered dreams, across the region, becomes Nafea’s own, intimate nightmare as she is arrested, beaten and tortured by security forces, and later imprisoned by her family for daring to speak out. Yet, her resilience and strength through her ordeal are remarkable.

Nafea, who received a standing ovation at the Walter Read Theater, said she was in the United States for six months to speak out and “spread the message” before returning to Lebanon. Her voice, vivacious and tinged with urgency, reflected her unwavering attunement to the unfolding drama of revolution. “I want to speak truthfully about the injustices happening in Egypt,” she declared. “Daily, people are getting kidnapped, arrested, tortured and no one knows about them. Women in Egypt are very strong, constantly standing up against the injustices of the regime. There are systematic attacks against protesters in the streets, but people are still organizing secretly. A group of women, just yesterday, protested by the presidential palace. Even though the police surrounded them, they stood their ground and had their voices heard!” she said.

The Trials of Spring, through cross-platform story-telling, overturns stereotypes of women in the Middle East as submissive. It portrays with gripping candor, the courage, the risks and the spirit of defiance of the women activists who insist on nothing less than justice and equality, and who, like Nafea, often suffer alienation from their families due to their refusal to back down and relinquish the struggle for their ideal.

“It was tricky filming from the beginning,” said Levison. “We thought we were making a film about triumph, and there’d be interviews with women that would illustrate their triumph. But all of a sudden, things changed. We realized we were shooting in a conflict zone. There was a constant struggle between wanting to get what was best for the story, yet what was best for the story could put us at tremendous risk.”

Indeed, the filmmakers capture harrowing moments, one, especially so, in the midst of a protest at night, when a woman is thrown to the ground, groped and assaulted by a group of men. The documentary does not shy away from capturing such moments, yet it manages to skillfully avoid passing heavy-handed judgments about the course of events unfolding in the conflict.

“The filmmakers lived the reality on the ground!” said Nafea.

After the grimness of the protests, their sordid aftermath, and the horrifying assaults, there has lately been some good news—hearts and minds appear to be changing. Nafea’s brother, who is in the army, telephoned her three days ago to say he was on her side now, and that he saw her as a victim of the revolution. “I can’t believe Mubarak and the old regime are being acquitted while you’re being charged and sentenced!” he said to her. There appears, too, to be the possibility of hopeful change for women. “Sexual harassment was used as a political weapon, but today there is an anti-sexual harassment campaign underway in Egypt,” affirmed Nafea.

It was certainly poignant to have Hend Nafea present after the screening. Seated on stage across from the audience, and speaking with passion, she made palpable the triumph of endurance and hope. Nafea brought home, too, the urgency and immediacy of the struggle for justice; it is one that traverses borders.

A significant outreach campaign is underway to ensure that *The Trials of Spring* travels widely. The film will be released in theaters in October.



Destiny from *Hetrick-Martin Institute*:

"I gained mentors at HMI. As life goes on, it expands. And you want to expand with life. You don't want to remain stuck or limited. Mentors help because you see how they live their life."

In March, 2015 NYWF released **RADIANCE**, a striking photo book celebrating 46 grantee partners of The New York Women's Foundation – some of the most powerful and daring activists, visionaries and community leaders transforming and illuminating New York City. In an inspired partnership with renowned photographer Emmanuel Andre, NYWF embarked on a journey to honor and raise the visibility of leaders who work valiantly to create a better New York City for all. Visit www.nywf.org/radiance for more information.

THE NEW YORK WOMEN'S FOUNDATION®

The New York Women's Foundation is a voice for women and a force for change. We are a cross-cultural alliance of women catalyzing partnerships and leveraging human and financial capital to achieve sustained economic security and justice for women and girls. With fierce determination, we mobilize hearts, minds and resources to create an equitable and just future for women, families and communities in New York City.

39 Broadway, 23 Floor, New York, NY 10006

tel: 647-564-5981 **email:** info@nywf.org

Twitter: @NYWomensFdn **Facebook:** NewYorkWomensFoundation

Instagram: @TheNewYorkWomensFoundation