

# The Power of Purpose

The Impact of Metropolitan College of New York  
on our City and our Communities



METROPOLITAN  
COLLEGE  
OF NEW YORK  
**MNY**  
FOUNDED BY ALDREY COHEN IN 1964

Edited by:  
Thomas L. Webber

“The real test of learning  
is not in what we know, but in  
**what we accomplish  
with what we know.**”

- Audrey Cohen



# **The Power of Purpose**

The Impact of Metropolitan College of New York  
on our City and our Communities

## **Editor**

**Thomas Lane Webber**

## **Contributors**

**Charles E. Armstrong**

**Wendy Cohen**

**Humphrey Crookendale**

**Tina Georgiou**

**Victoria R. Hornstein**

**Mary B. Martel**

**Joanne Passaro**

**Grace G. Roosevelt**

**Thomas L. Webber**



Revised edition published by Metropolitan College of New York.  
Copyright ©2020 Metropolitan College of New York. All rights reserved.



# Welcome

Charles E. Armstrong, Chair of the Board of Trustees

It has been one of the distinct honors in my life to serve as Trustee and Chair of the Board of Metropolitan College of New York. And I am sure that as you read this book, you will understand why.



The spirit of empowerment and entrepreneurship is the true nature of this college. Those characteristics are exemplified in our students. And these are their stories. Stories of education in action, steeped in a pedagogy to serve a higher purpose with the goal of fomenting positive change through student's constructive actions in their workplace and respective communities utilizing the litmus of social justice.

And social justice, when properly applied, means giving people the means and confidence to make them their own proactive agents to enrich their world and ours. We believe that the greatest opportunity for change comes when you give people the tools they need to have their voice heard, empowering them to become critical thinkers and developers in new ways of solving problems to make the greatest difference.

Real stories - real people, exploring and connecting to their education in new ways, going boldly into a world where many have never ventured, all while adding value to their community, creating their own path to be free and equal in opportunity and beyond.

I believe that you will not only enjoy these real life stories, but they'll inspire you, as they have inspired me, to help make a change in the community where you live.



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Alumni Profiles</b> .....	5
Corrine .....	6
Sha-King .....	10
Holly .....	14
Vashon .....	18
Jocelyne .....	22
Larry .....	26
Lovely .....	30
Syrena .....	34
Kenya .....	38
Krystal .....	42
Teri .....	46
Marricka .....	50
Kayo .....	54
Joseph .....	58
Britt .....	62
Michael .....	66
Flor-Maria .....	70
Yussuf .....	74
Thomas .....	78
Delores .....	82
Tuesday .....	86
Viviana .....	90
Shana .....	94
Gary .....	98
Adlette & Cassiana .....	102
<b>History</b> .....	107
Timeline .....	108
Building A Better World: A Short History of MCNY .....	110
Remembering My Mother, Audrey Cohen .....	116
<b>One Faculty Member's View of MCNY</b> .....	122
<b>Who We Are</b> .....	128
Board of Trustees .....	129
Administrative Leadership .....	130
Academic and Faculty Leadership .....	131
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	132

# Introduction

Joanne Passaro, President



It is my great privilege to introduce this book, which aims to demonstrate the outsized impact of Metropolitan College of New York on our students and our communities across New York City.



MCNY is a unique institution of higher education. Its mission explicitly aims to advance social justice, and, according to U.S. News it serves one of the highest percentages of adult students in the nation. Most of our students (85%) come from Black and Latinx communities, and a similar percentage are economically disadvantaged. Students come to our campuses in lower Manhattan and in the South Bronx to improve their lives and the lives of their families, often after transferring from larger colleges and universities that do not provide the same level of personal attention. MCNY is an extraordinary community that, as you will read in the stories that follow, is like family to our students. One student recently commented that it felt like the safest space in the City. All of us, faculty, staff and administration, focus on one thing: delivering a purposeful, workplace-embedded education that will empower our students to achieve professional success and to bring constructive change to their families, their places of work, and their communities.

The College's focus on educating adults has been consistent since our founding in 1964. MCNY's unique curriculum, Purpose-Centered Education, harnesses the knowledge and maturity of adult students and hones their skills as professionals who can add value and lead positive change. Each semester, every student is required to design, implement and evaluate a project that aims to improve programs or services in their workplace or internship site. Over successive semesters, these "Constructive Actions" (CAs) strengthen students' abilities to assess situations, identify needs or gaps, and devise solutions. Students' CA projects have provided the platform for alumni to start

their own businesses and non-profits, to advance in their professions, and to drive positive change in law, policy and practice throughout the NY metropolitan region.

MCNY's impact on New York City is significant. Nearly 90% of recent MCNY graduates reported that they work in one of the five boroughs. And, hundreds of our students and alumni work in NYC government: they can be found in the offices of the Mayor, in many City Council offices, in four of the five Borough Presidents' offices, as well as in major city agencies such as the Human Resources Administration, the Port Authority, the Administration for Children's Services, the Department of Homeless Services, the Housing Authority, the Department for Disability and Special Needs, the Fire Department, Metropolitan Transit Authority, and the Board of Education. Countless others work in non-profit human service organizations. Just a small sampling of these agencies would include: the Puerto Rican Family Institute, Amida Care, ADAPT Community Network, Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, BronxConnect, the Bronx Parent Housing Network, Samaritan Daytop Village, the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, Goddard Riverside Community Center, HELP USA, and Acacia Network. These students and alumni work to advance equity and justice across the City and they have been doing so for over 50 years.

But despite the deep impact of our alumni on our communities since 1964, MCNY is not as well-known as it should be. When I arrived as President in 2018, one of the most consistent messages I heard from stakeholders was that "MCNY is the best kept secret in New York." That is why we decided to put out this book and tell our story through the experiences of our students and alumni, who actualize our educational and social justice mission in their professional lives and in their communities. Through their stories, we hope to illustrate the power of their collective impact within and beyond the New York metropolitan area; on community members, legislators, donors, students, and educators.

This book will also contain a brief history of the College, written by trustee and emerita faculty member Grace G. Roosevelt; a personal reflection about our founder, Audrey Cohen, written by her daughter, Wendy Cohen, Vice Chair of our Board of Trustees; and an essay about the role of faculty at MCNY by long-time faculty member, and current Vice President for Academic Affairs, Humphrey Crookendale.

MCNY was borne out of the social upheavals of the 1960s. Its mission to promote social justice has arguably never been more important than it is today. Our experience over more than fifty years has shown us that educating adults is an important driver of social change, as the impact touches two or even three generations of family members in the same household. Students often tell me that their own children take schooling more seriously when they observe their mother or father going back to college. The success of our students and their families is the nucleus of change brought about by MCNY.

To end on a personal note, I know from first-hand experience the benefits that maturity brings to the classroom. I was 30 years old when I graduated from Duke University, at a time when adult students were not as common as they are now. I was earning a very meager living, and could only attend because I lived nearby and was fortunate to receive a full undergraduate scholarship. My degree program, which I designed myself, focused on race, class and gender oppression, as I knew from my experiences growing up in New York City that the personal hardships I faced—and often created for myself—were consistently mitigated by my privilege as a white woman. It is the inequity of that privilege that MCNY aims to dismantle by educating our students with Purpose.

We welcome you to read about our students and our history, and to join us in our work.



# Alumni Profiles



# Corrine Alauna Foster

BPS '07, MPA '16

- Executive Director, Day 2 Multi-Purpose Center
- Founder, The Queendom NYC



I am someone who wasn't supposed to make it. According to all the statistics, I should have wound up on Public Assistance living in the projects. First of all I am a Black female. Next I was born into a dysfunctional family, with one parent a crack addict. My Mom beat me and I was a runaway during most of my high school years. In addition, I had a severe learning disability that wasn't diagnosed until fifth grade. Finally, I became pregnant as a teenager and have been a single mom for all of my adult life. Yet, somehow against all these odds I have made it. I have a B.A. Degree in Human Services and a Masters Degree in Public Affairs and Administration. I am currently the Executive Director of the Day 2 Multi-Purpose Center in Brooklyn which works with youth and ex-offenders. And on July 10, 2019 I launched my own organization called, "The Queendom NYC." Its purpose is to change the narrative of women, like me, who have been victims of domestic violence and to help them overcome their past by recognizing their strengths and forming strong bonds with other strong women. Perhaps most importantly, I am the proud parent of six thriving children and foster mother to four of my nieces. Much of my success I owe to the Metropolitan College of New York.

My connection with MCNY began in 2001 when I was twenty-one years old and homeless living with my two babies in the Bronx. I went to a job fair at the College's Bronx campus and found a job working as an office assistant at the St. Christopher's Agency. After a few months there my supervisor saw my organizational skills and told me I needed to go back to school. She suggested I go to what was then called Audrey Cohen College, the very place where I had gone to the job fair. I went back to the College and the truth is on my first try I failed miserably. Here I was a working mom with two kids trying to go to school full-time. Plus I was pregnant again. So I dropped out. Two years later I determined to try again and when I needed a field placement I went to see Joanna Russel who was then the Director of Career Services. I broke down crying and said to her, I

**“Because of MCNY  
I am no longer a  
lady walking around  
with shame.  
Now I am a  
proud woman  
who is able  
to speak out  
and I intend to tell  
other women that are  
experiencing what  
I experienced,  
YOU ARE NOT  
ALONE.”**

**-Corrine Alauna Foster**



don't think I can do it, I'm just a Mom. This sentence changed my life. Joanna gave me a speech about all the skills needed to be a good mom and gave me the courage to talk with the people at Hudson Guild, where my children were in daycare, about interning with them. This time with MCNY nurturing me the whole way, and with the help and support of my Purpose 2 cohort members, I was able to juggle my internship, parenting, and studies and in 2007 I received my BPS and landed a job at the Department of Education making \$40,000 a year.

Then in 2013, disaster struck. I was in an abusive relationship with a man who beat me so severely it caused some brain damage. Due to this damage, while I was pregnant with my sixth and final child, I blacked out and fell down a flight of stairs. Luckily the child was all right, but the fall caused nine broken bones and necessitated 19 hours of surgery. During the many months of rehab that followed, including three months in a wheelchair, I lost my job, my car and my home. Homeless services placed me and my, by then, four children at a shelter in Harlem on the same block where one of my MCNY cohort members, Joseph Hayes, lived. One day Joseph, who is now an adjunct professor in the CASAC program at MCNY, was talking to me and he said, "What are you doing Sis, you've got to stop feeling sorry for yourself. It's time for you to go

back to school and get your Masters.” And so that’s what I did. While still undergoing intensive therapy, I went back to MCNY and received my Masters in December 2016.

Because of my education at MCNY, both as an undergraduate and graduate, I have the interpersonal skills to effectively work with clients of all types and to teach my staff proper approaches and implementation strategies. Often my education at MCNY makes me the most strategically knowledgeable person in the room. My dreams are always possible because MCNY taught me how to plan. As we know, if we fail to plan we plan to fail. At MCNY, purpose is at the center, purpose and empowerment. You have to set your purpose so that you can empower yourself and those around you. Anyone who enters a classroom at MCNY will learn that they are not a victim that they have the ability to impact and influence their surroundings and their community. Because of MCNY I am no longer a lady walking around with shame. Now I am a proud woman who is able to speak out and I intend to tell other women that are experiencing what I experienced, YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

Get more of  
Corrine’s story at  
[mcny.edu/powerofpurpose](http://mcny.edu/powerofpurpose)



**Sha-King  
Graham**  
BA American Urban  
Studies '16

- Case Manager, Acacia Network
- Recipient of a 2016 Independent Sector Student Community Service Award through the Council of Independent Colleges and Universities
- Member of Habitat III at the United Nations

I heard about MCNY from my aunt, Terry Quider, who had been a student at MCNY and later helped develop its CASAC substance abuse program. She always talked so positively about the experience. I could not attend right out of high school—I was in NYC’s foster care system, adopted at a later age, so I could not afford to enroll in college until after age 23, when I was on my own. I didn’t forget about school and always wanted to come back. I was living in the South Bronx and tried Bronx Community College but that didn’t work out. But I wanted to get a degree. I was doing community organizing around prison expansion and police brutality issues; I wanted an education to get beyond organizing on the streets and saying “fight the power”—that has its place but I wanted a degree to have a bigger impact on policy and making change in my community.

I came to MCNY in 2012 to get my degree; I was 30. I had been having apartment issues and other issues that many people in my community face. My aunt came to MCNY as an adult and always talked so highly of it. I knew that I would feel comfortable with adult students who were like me, and maybe had to relearn how to write papers, keep a schedule. The students who come here come from communities that struggle so much—I have seen single mothers with multiple children who graduate with honors at MCNY, and I looked at that and it made me know that anything is possible.

When I came here I wanted to get involved in my school. I checked out the mentor program. At first I thought, ok I don’t want to be in another circle with people of color where we’d be bitching and crying, leaving with no solutions. But it wasn’t that, it was so much more. There was tutoring. And there’d be people working on online businesses together, people pulling each other up: “You weren’t here yesterday, what is going on in your life? What is going on at home?” And before you know it, you would have helped that person, and then you’d see them graduate. It seems selfish to say, but I got so much

out of it myself, as a mentor. There is one woman I just spoke to, someone we mentored, who started off so cynical saying “I can’t do this, half my kids are grown, I can’t come all the way from Staten Island.” And let me tell you something, she is in grad school at MCNY now.

My comrades in school and I really became close. Most of us had similar views of community, of politics, of hurt and pain. We came from the same backgrounds. I didn’t have to hide what I didn’t know how to do. A lot of times at night time we would get together, talk about our work, and someone would say “did you get that paper topic?” and then we would start to talk and make plans to meet up, become a team, study together. The classes were small, and that made it easy to get to know each other. And we helped each other through.

Right after college I went into case management at Acacia Network, working on mental health issues, connecting homeless families to housing and resources in the community. I then received an Equitable Public Space Fellowship through the Design Trust, though I was unable to complete it due to financial burdens.

The project I’m working on now with a classmate from MCNY is Policy for Dummies, a platform to get people involved and knowledgeable. What would be the point



**“I came from  
the South Bronx,  
and everyone  
always said  
get your degree  
and get out  
of the ‘hood.  
No! I am  
staying in the  
‘hood and  
working with  
the community  
to make it  
better.”**

-Sha-King Graham

of not using everything we learned in our Constructive Actions, all the critical thinking, to shape policy? We are starting with a podcast and YouTube channel, to help people understand policy and the importance of voting in City Council members, judges. We are going to get people with MCNY involved as well. That is what my Urban Studies degree helped with as well, to do community needs assessments and learn what the community needs, not just go with my own perspective and say “this is what I think the community needs.”

This sounds so cheesy to say, but MCNY gave me purpose, it gave me purpose to know that there are people around me who are on the same path, it gave me purpose to know what I really want to do in this world. Sooner or later it is going to be us, millennials, in the White House. I want to work toward grooming our community to be ready for and to be part of that change. I came from the South Bronx, and everyone always said get your degree and get out of the ‘hood. No! I am staying in the ‘hood and working with the community to make it better.

Get more of  
Sha-Kings’s story at  
[mcny.edu/powerofpurpose](http://mcny.edu/powerofpurpose)

# Holly Bonner, BPS '02, MPA '08

- New York City Civic Engagement  
Commissioner
- Creator of [Blindmotherhood.com](http://Blindmotherhood.com)
- MCNY Adjunct Professor



I began school in 1999 when MCNY had an extension site on Staten Island. My apartment was located just around the corner. I remember passing the College and reading the signs in the window as I did my weekly grocery shopping. It took weeks before I mustered up enough courage to go inside and gather more information. As I listened to the admissions person, learning more about purpose centered education, and realizing I could earn my Bachelor's in less than 3 years-time; I knew I was ready to enroll.

One of the qualities I liked most about the classroom structure of MCNY was that you went through your classes as a cohort. Over the course of eight semesters, my classmates and I became a cohesive unit. The Constructive Action (CA) project was something that seemed quite daunting at the beginning. However, with the support of my professors, I realized how the real-life experiences of my internship settings were being documented for me to refer back to in years to come. Not only did I enjoy the challenge of creating each CA, with each semester my technical writing skills vastly improved.

There were times during my undergraduate degree when I felt myself becoming overwhelmed but the relationships I had forged with my professors gave me the confidence I needed to push on. I also found the school's writing center to be the epicenter of my advancement. MCNY provided me with everything the larger colleges and universities could do, but on a smaller scale. Any student who attends MCNY can achieve the same academic results at traditional colleges, but they will also come out a stronger writer. MCNY has brought back the art of writing and because the school remains committed to the written word our alumni are reaching phenomenal heights.

Throughout the duration of my Bachelor's Degree, I battled an aggressive form of breast cancer. Thankfully, I finally went into remission while I was receiving my MPA in



**"I have come to realize that not only was MCNY the perfect fit for me, but the education I received at the College provided invaluable lessons about what it means to be both a successful professional and a female advocate in my community."**

**-Holly Bonner**

Public Administration. However, one year later, while pursuing my second Masters in Social Work at Columbia University, my cancer returned. One of the medications used in my chemotherapy regime caused my optic nerves to detach from my brain, rendering me legally blind. Six months after losing my vision, my husband and I learned we were going to have a baby. Now the mother of two daughters, I don't let my visual impairment impact my daily life. In the fall of 2016, I was matched with my first guide dog, Frances. I am extremely proud to be an adjunct professor at MCNY where Frances accompanies me to and from campus.

I started a blog, [blindmotherhood.com](http://blindmotherhood.com), to document my journey of parenting with sight loss. While designing my website, I found myself relying on many of the Constructive Action skills I had acquired over the years. By establishing my target population, conducting independent research, and defining the problem my website became a comprehensive resource for parents and professionals in over 180 countries.

The experience of losing my vision renewed my relationship with my faith. In September 2018, I decided to return to school, getting my third Master's Degree in Pastoral Care and Counseling (MAPCC) at New York Theological Seminary. I enjoyed the seminary so much that I have

decided to continue my studies and am pursuing a Doctorate in Ministry.

In April of 2019, I was appointed by Mayor de Blasio as a New York City Civic Engagement Commissioner. My responsibilities include working with the Staten Island faith-based community to help make voting more accessible for immigrants as well as for the disabled. I feel this work greatly relates back to our founder, Audrey Cohen's, concept of empowerment. If we can foster a sense of empowerment amongst a community, there is nothing they can't accomplish.

I have come to realize not only was MCNY the perfect fit for me, but the education I received at the college provided invaluable lessons about what it means to be both a successful professional and a female advocate in my community.

Having a professor with a disability has also proven to be an indispensable experience. It teaches MCNY students how to be formidable. By the third week of classes, they don't see my vision loss – they see Professor Bonner – the person. I am not only teaching course material, but I am changing the MCNY student's perception of disability.

MCNY students are hardworking people. They are masters at juggling their personal and professional lives. Each semester, I am awestruck by the stories of my students. Like myself, many of them have overcome potentially insurmountable challenges in their quest to attain an education. The diversity present in the halls of MCNY truly embodies this great city.



• Spiritual Psychology  
 CH. 1  
 CH. 2  
 CH. 3  
 CH. 4  
 CH. 5  
 CH. 6  
 CH. 7  
 CH. 8  
 CH. 9  
 CH. 10

**Vashon  
 Smith**  
**BPS '14**

- Radio Personality
- MCNY Adjunct Professor

I grew up in in Harlem, but I'm originally from Baltimore, Maryland. My mother was a promoter and manager of jazz musicians and my dad was a pop, hip-hop artist in the '80s. My background was in entertainment and music but when I was in my twenties, I got into publishing. I worked under the Editor in Chief for Word Up! magazine and by the time I moved on, I was creative director of Today's Black Woman magazine and Word Up! magazine. Eventually, I decided to leave publishing and pursue music. I had my own band, left the city and moved to Europe. I was living in Germany on and off for two years. Then, when I came back in 2003, I started in radio.

What led me to MCNY was the radio show I do at WBLS. We had a caller and she was distraught. We were recording and at some point I nudged Lenny Green to put her on hold. The conversation was too personal. I just felt so bad. I felt like I needed to do more. It just hit me: I'm here and I'm entertaining people, but the people are calling because they really need help. The next day, I reached out myself and we talked about how her partner in life was dying and how the disease he contracted, she contracted. After the second call, I felt like I left her again with no hope. I didn't know where she could go for counseling and I had nothing to offer except an ear. I promised myself if I was going to be sitting here speaking to people, I needed to be able to help them.

MCNY came up in my search and it brought up the Human Services program and the timeframe. I thought, at least it gears me towards counseling. I had no idea what I was in for. MCNY happened to be the first school I visited because of the College's location. I had a list and I was just going to get brochures. When I visited MCNY, something just said don't leave. All in all, it took about three hours and I was in school. I called my mom to tell her the news. I said, "Guess what? I enrolled in college." She said, "Really!?" Her happiness was validating.

I didn't really realize what I was doing until I took Dr. Damian's class. He is an attention to detail person and that helped me a lot. Before I took him I didn't see the CA, I didn't get it. It's a dissertation and I tell my students it's a business plan. I tell them to make sure they have some type of interest in all their CAs, because you can sit down with someone in business and they can make it a business plan— It could be your LLC or your 501C(3). The CA gave me structure. It was tiring sometimes because I had other classes that were just as demanding and rewarding.

The relationships at MCNY have been so fulfilling with the professors and with the students whom I have made friends with. You get these relationships that will support you emotionally, but they also keep you accountable for your work and for your growth. After I graduated and went to LIU, I would come back to study and do all my homework at MCNY.

The Mentor Program office might as well have been a dorm room. Everyone congregated there and had their needs met, whether it was financial, emotional, intellectual, or informational. We turned into tutors instead of mentors. That was the heart of the school for me. It was a community that really cared about one another.



**“The reason I’m in a doctoral program now is because of MCNY. I want to continue and to be part of a community of trusting people that want to help show people how to do the work, life’s work.”**

**-Vashon Smith**

The reason I'm in a doctoral program now is because of MCNY. I want to continue to be part of a community of trusting people that want to help show people how to do the work, life's work. MCNY changed my life. I'm supposed to be singing somewhere; I'm an entertainment person. Even though I am still in entertainment, this gives me balance. This is real life and entertainment is my fun spirited self. This is how I show up in the world now and give back and entertainment is how I fill my soul. That's how I see it. When you think about conventional colleges, how many students in the classroom, how much attention you don't get, how clinical it can be...this program is more inclusive, you have to do the work but it's from your perspective.

I didn't think I would be here. If anyone told me in 1994 that I would be in school for seven years straight, I would have laughed at them. Now I'm an advocate for education, not necessarily school, just education.



**Jocelynn  
Rainey, EdD**  
MS in Administration '97

- Chief Executive Officer,  
Getting Out and Staying Out

was born in Richmond, Virginia and grew up primarily in Connecticut. I made New York City my home in 1989 after graduating from Southern Connecticut University where I earned a Bachelor of Science in Sociology. I started working for a nonprofit that provided services for the handicapped. I went on to work with developmentally disabled adults at Independent Living Association where I had some great career opportunities. I became a group home manager and worked my way up the ranks to area coordinator.

I was thinking about what I wanted to do next in my career and also considering a move to Washington, D.C. Many of the job postings required a master's degree and I didn't want the lack of a credential to keep me from an opportunity. I was working long hours and also on call 24 hours, I didn't have time to think about where to go to school. My Mom had taken classes at Audrey Cohen College (now known as MCNY), so I looked into it and was immediately excited about the program. It also fit my lifestyle and needs.

I wasn't sure if I would like being a part of cohort, it was my first experience with such a model. I found I liked being part of a group of people going through the same experience, working hard and having high expectations of themselves. We all helped each other and pushed each other to do better. I don't think I would have been as successful in the program without my cohort. My classmates were brilliant, I made many great friends. At MCNY, you build relationships because you are together, you are in a safe place. It's a rigorous academic environment and everyone wants to do well and will also help each other to succeed.

The professors really cared about the students, there was a lot of support. Professor Crookendale really took the time to get to know all of the students. He spent a lot of time with us and I felt he really held us to high standards, particularly with academic

**"I would not be  
who I am today  
without  
my master's  
from MCNY;  
I would not have  
had the same  
visibility and  
responsibility  
throughout  
my career."**

- Jocelyne Rainey



writing, and I appreciated that. As a result, my writing improved at MCNY. My passion for writing was fueled there.

To me, MCNY felt like a place of business. I was coming from work and I wanted it to be an extension of what I was doing. I loved the way the college was designed, I felt comfortable there. The rigor of the classes and amount of work at MCNY was an adjustment for me, one that I had to make quickly. In 1997 when I completed the program I was a full time 30 year old working mother of a two year old, and had just purchased my first home with my husband. The program taught me how to balance my life well, it was a foundation. MCNY was an amazing experience, it was the absolute right program for me.

Purpose Centered Education and Constructive Actions were different from anything I did as an undergraduate. I felt like this approach to education was aligned with who I was as a person and the work I was doing in general. Very early on in my career it made me think differently about how I do my work. Now, it's more of who I am.

Going to college was always a given for me. Earning master's and doctorate degrees were important choices I made to advance my career. I went to MCNY for a

master's to make sure career opportunities would be open to me and I feel like I got so much more. When I decided to enter a doctorate program at St. John Fisher College, I knew it was something I could do because of my positive experience at MCNY. It was important for me to focus on social justice, just as I had at MCNY, because it is something I care about.

I consider myself a continuous learner. One of my sons said to me, "Mom you are always thinking." My children, who saw me going to graduate school as an adult, see me as a real resource. I think I've motivated them to be continuous learners.

Getting my master's at MCNY enabled me to move from operations to human resources and changed the trajectory of my career. It has also enabled me to teach human resources as an adjunct professor. I held human resources leadership positions at Boar's Head Provisions and Agata & Valentina before joining Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation (BNYDC) as Senior Vice President, Human Resources and Workforce Development in 2011 where I rose to Chief Administrative Officer and Executive Vice President. In 2020, I became CEO of Getting Out and Staying Out a nonprofit that helps formerly incarcerated and justice-involved young men. I would not be who I am today without my master's from MCNY; I would not have had the same visibility and responsibility throughout my career.

# Larry Scott Blackmon

## MPA '07

- Vice President for Public Affairs,  
FreshDirect
- Former Deputy Commissioner,  
NYC Parks Department
- MCNY Adjunct Professor



Let me start from the beginning. I was born and raised in Harlem, and did my undergraduate degree at SUNY New Paltz. From there I went into the music industry, doing music promotion for EMI Records and later at Island Black Music. At that time, a friend of one of my older brothers worked as a senior campaign advisor for C. Virginia Fields, a city council member from Harlem who was running for Manhattan Borough President. It was total fate. During a conversation one day, my brother's friend asked what I was doing professionally. I said I was doing music promotion. She said, "Well why don't you help me by promoting my candidate's campaign?" I did, and Virginia Fields won! My Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity brother, who happened to be Virginia's chief of staff, asked me to become a member of her government team, and the rest is history.

I went on to work many campaigns. For instance, I did Hillary Clinton's first race for U.S. Senate. She won, and that opened me up to other races. I worked as deputy state director for Senator Schumer, and I kept climbing the ladder, climbing the ladder. I completed two of Mayor Bloomberg's re-election campaigns; served as deputy commissioner and chief of staff of the New York City Department of Small Business Services; and most recently I was deputy commissioner for the parks department.

While I was working for the City, I heard about MCNY's strong relationships with city agencies. I was averse to traditional master's programs. MCNY's program had the real-world experiential components and the timeframe I was looking for. I enrolled and I developed a strong bond with my fellow students and with my Constructive Action (CA) professor, Eduardo Thompson. My relationships with fellow students are strong to this day. Some of us have travelled together, and we are all connected on social media. Many of my classmates have started non-profits and organizations of their own, and they sometimes come and ask for advice. Rhonda Rock, Chris Rock's

cousin was a classmate; she started a phenomenal new organization. My classmates were extraordinarily tight. And we stayed that way.

My master's degree at Metropolitan allowed me to even the playing field. I was constantly being interviewed for positions and offered opportunities; I would ask for a certain salary and was frequently told that I didn't have a master's. Ok, I decided that I needed to go and get my degree – and I did just that.

My CA project was based on increasing the number of minority and women-owned businesses (MWBEs) in the City of New York. I ran ads in the Amsterdam News and other publications, we got great responses. The timing for a MWBE-based CA was perfectly aligned with where government was heading. The CA project made me an expert on MWBE issues, and after that I was able to work with the MWBE staff of two of New York's Governors, Elliot Spitzer and David Patterson, and many MWBE advocacy associations in a closer role. I am still considered an expert in this area.

I love Metropolitan. I have been blessed to come back and teach, and I love the students. I have developed a reputation as one of MCNY's toughest professors. The reason I'm tough is that I've faced workplace challeng-



**“Here in the Bronx,  
where I am now based,  
Metropolitan  
is a beacon  
of hope,  
it is a change agent  
in the community.”**

**-Larry Scott Blackmon**

es, I've seen the discrimination, I've seen how students of color have to work twice as hard to get ahead. My students may be fearful when they start the class, but after they graduate they are so grateful that I pushed them. And that's why I love Metropolitan because everyone is focused on making sure that our students have what they need in order to succeed. Thanks to MCNY, I have an opportunity to impart wisdom to people coming up behind me. I see former students all the time, and they thank me and tell me how what they learned in my class helped them in their post-collegiate endeavors, whether it is opening up a dance studio, a non-profit, or working for the City. We are really making a difference in the lives of the students that we touch.

Particularly here in the Bronx, where I am now based, Metropolitan is a beacon of hope, it is a change agent in the community. Students walk in and they know we will be there with them every step of the way. That feeling of security resonates with students. I love being part of our mission, giving students the knowledge and skills they need to truly succeed. When they leave here, they are ready to make a difference, a difference that comes from the culture we have established at Metropolitan College of New York.



**Lovely  
Paulemon  
Joachim**  
**BPS '08**

- Community Services Manager,  
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
- Co-Founder, Love and Hope Organization-Haiti

immigrated to New York from Haiti with my father and younger sister when I was ten years old and a year later my mother joined us. The culture and language was new and I didn't speak a word of English. I worked hard, learned English, attended school, and later graduated from high school. After high school I married the love of my life, Erickson, and later had two beautiful girls. Although it was very difficult continuing in school, I knew that was my only option. My family is a firm believer in higher education. I started at Medgar Evers College but it wasn't for me. The schedule wasn't flexible for a working mother with small children. After I ended my first semester at Medgar Evers College, and while applying to other colleges, a friend of my mother's daughter was attending Metropolitan College of New York and thought it might be the place for me. She suggested that I go check it out. I talked with the people in admissions and liked how MCNY had a flexible schedule with both evening and on-line courses. With a husband and two daughters and a full-time job I needed a college that understood the challenges of working, parenting, and going to school all at the same time. I signed up, took a full-time course load, and in three years I had my Bachelors Degree.

In addition to its flexible schedule what was so wonderful about the College was the smaller class size and the interest the professors took in the students, how they made the time to meet with us. I also liked the fact that we could use what we were learning in the classroom in both our personal lives and in our careers. Perhaps the best example of this is that near the end of my college program my professor, Dr. Adele Weiner, worked with me on a Constructive Action that I was implementing in my home country of Haiti. My Aunt and I had long dreamed of opening an orphanage in Haiti and in December 2009 we opened "The House of Love and Hope" orphanage with a capacity of 25 children. While at the College I had worked on researching, designing, and



**“Whether you’re still in high school or a grandmother over seventy, you still have to find your purpose, discover how you are going to make a difference and give back to the community. That’s what MCNY taught me.”**

-Lovely Paulemon Joachim

implementing the organization as part of my final Constructive Action. Then, only two weeks after we opened the orphanage a large, tragic earthquake struck Haiti. I had just returned to New York. Dr. Weiner was the first person to telephone to make sure that my family and I were all right and offering to help in any way she could.

After leaving the College, in addition to opening the orphanage, I went back to school and got a Master’s Degree from Adelphi College in Early Childhood Special Education. I currently work as a case manager with a case load of over sixty senior citizens doing a lot of advocacy and interventions. I am also very involved with my Haitian community of East Flatbush and Sheepshead Bay and in my church. My most proud accomplishments are my two beautiful daughters Ericka & Emily Joachim. The oldest is attending college studying Occupational Therapy and the younger is about to enter her senior year in high school. In terms of the future, I go back and forth between thinking that I will return to Haiti and become directly involved in running the orphanage and, alternatively, becoming even more involved with my New York Haitian community perhaps even running for elective office someday.

When I think of MCNY the word that most occurs to my mind is purpose. The College taught me how to put my goals, my purpose, into action by creating a Plan of Action. This skill is something I use in both my personal life and in my career. I tell my daughters and I tell my seniors you have to find your own purpose. Whether you're still in high school or a grandmother over seventy, you still have to find your purpose, discover how you are going to make a difference and give back to the community. That's what MCNY taught me.

# Syrena Huggins

## MPA '13

- Program Director, Supportive Services  
for Veteran Families Program, HELP USA



was born and raised in Brooklyn. I did my undergraduate work at Hobart and William Smith Colleges; at the time I thought pre-med was what I wanted to do. But as I took classes I realized that medicine was not the way I wanted to help people, that I wanted to focus on connecting people to programs and resources that could help them improve their lives. In high school I didn't know that social services was a profession; I learned that it was in a conversation with one of my college professors. I ended up creating my own major, in Minority Health and Social Policy, and I double-minored in Biology and Human Relations.

After I graduated in 2005, I got married, had my daughter, and started my career. My first job was as a Medicaid Enrollment Specialist, and through that experience I learned about the range of other programs and services that are available to people. I moved on to an Intake Specialist position at an Outpatient Mental Health Center in Crown Heights in Brooklyn, which was the neighborhood I grew up in. It had a small staff, and it was baptism by fire as there was not a lot in place. After the birth of my daughter, in 2007, I took a Case Manager position at CAMBA HomeBase, a nonprofit homelessness prevention initiative. That was where everything started for me in terms of my career. I worked my way up and eventually I became a program supervisor of the Staten Island site.

Once I became a supervisor I decided to go back to school, get my master's and open up other opportunities for my career. My very first supervisor at CAMBA was an MCNY alum, and she gave me insight into the Public Administration program. I attended an Open House and met with Dean Crookendale. The program sounded like exactly what I was looking for, and I signed up on the spot.

As soon as I saw the first syllabus I wondered how I would do it; it was rigorous! That's where the beauty of the cohort model comes in. I was going through the program with

the same group of people. You build relationships and friendships. We relied on each other and we carried each other through.

My Constructive Action project focused on improving the internal auditing procedures at my employer CAMBA HomeBase. Changes to funding mandates had affected the quality of work performed by the staff. I researched the issues and came up with a pilot program that created a more intelligent approach to satisfying funder mandates without sacrificing quality.

The pilot program, which was the result of my Constructive Action project, was successful and has been since rolled out in CAMBA's HomeBase program. It also got me noticed by our vice president. I was promoted to the program manager for quality assurance, overseeing quality for all of the agency's HomeBase program.

That promotion was the basis of my professional success. It positioned me to look for other opportunities, and in 2016 I took a position as Assistant Program Director of the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program at HELP USA and was promoted to Program Director in 2018.

So you can see that my MCNY education played an important part in my current success. I recommend



**"Strong and supportive relationships with faculty and fellow students will give you what you need to succeed, and MCNY will advance your careers, just like it helped advance mine."**

- Syrena Huggins

MCNY to staff who have not completed their undergraduate degrees or who are looking for graduate degrees. The accelerated programs benefit people who are working full-time and who want to complete their degrees in a shorter amount of time while still getting the benefits of a strong education. Strong and supportive relationships with faculty and fellow students will give you what you need to succeed, and MCNY will advance your careers, just like it helped advance mine.



**Kenya Cagle**  
**MBA Media Management '00**

- Film Producer

I am a product of Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. I love Bed-Stuy. The people, then and now, are resilient. I was lucky to have both of my parents. We were poor. They worked hard. The neighborhood was bad. I stayed out of trouble but trouble followed me because I was an artistic kid. I was bullied. Determination and martial arts got me through.

As a child, I would wake my brother and we would perform in our room or for family. When I was in junior high school, I kept skipping science class and going to theater classes that were not part of my class schedule. I advocated for myself making a deal with the principal: If I could continue to go to theater class and still maintain my grades in science, I would be allowed to continue. The theater teacher had already cast me as the lead in the school play, so they went for it. I was determined, as a child, just as I am now, to follow my passion. By the time I was 13 years old, I was a working actor making almost as much money as my parents combined.

I was no stranger to Purpose. As a social worker for 20 years, a Family Preservationist for the City of New York, I loved my clients. My job was to help preserve the family. I removed the risk to at-risk children instead of removing them from their homes. I made a difference but eventually, it was no longer my purpose. What I discovered as child in Bed-Stuy and the stories of my clients, shaped my world.

I am a storyteller and my purpose is to share stories with the world. Somehow I always knew that I would be a filmmaker because I could visualize stories. The relationship between Constructive Action and what happens in real life is a passionate connection. It took a lot of digging to figure out what Constructive Actions are and how they were to play role in furthering my education. In the end, it's just really learning what to do and applying it to a plan. My plan was to turn my screenplay into a film.

**“What I discovered  
as child in Bed-Stuy,  
and the stories  
of my clients,  
shaped my world.  
I am a  
storyteller and  
my purpose is  
to share stories  
with the world.”**

- Kenya Cagle



I was lucky to have the support of Stephen Greenwald, who was President of MCNY at the time. During our MBA trip to The Cannes Film Festival, he supported my efforts and after my pitch, he helped guide me through the legal process. I was able to leave with a check to start production on making my film. When you study Self and Others as it applies to the film industry, you learn that you have to consider a deal as a whole. What is everyone getting out of it? What need does it fulfill? How do I make this successful for everyone involved?

When students go to film school, they learn how to create great business plans. But a great business plan means nothing if you don't have the network of people or the know-how to pitch your plan. Going through the process of the MCNY Media Management MBA program, you get a completely rounded education. Creating your Constructive Action is basically the plan, the pitch, and the bible of your business.

When I think about marketing, one of the things that I think about is my book, Prophet: The Story of Nat Turner. It became an Amazon Bestseller for about two years. It's not that I got lucky with a book company that invested in marketing but that I knew what my marketing should be and where it needed to be. I had an understanding of my audience. If we are writing for everyone; we are

writing for no one. In an industry that is so competitive, you have to know your audience. In my case, audience translates to purpose.

Now, with 30 films under my belt including 17 features and numerous worldwide awards, I know that I have contributed to the global film community by mentoring young filmmakers and telling great stories. It isn't about the money or the fame. My wealth is in my passion and purpose. But the money doesn't hurt!

As an adult, going back to school, I knew that I didn't want to waste my time. I chose MCNY because it had a highly targeted MBA that focused on the Business of Film. I knew that this was what I needed to get to the next level. Purpose-Centered Education helped me define how I was going to get there.

# Krystal Melendez

## BPS '16

- New York University MPH Candidate
- Bilingual Internship & Career Coordinator,  
Good Shepherd Services



My name is Krystal Melendez. I'm from Brooklyn and that is the borough I claim. Specifically, I am from Coney Island. Where I grew up definitely shaped my experiences and helped me realize that I am an activist. Those experiences propelled me to pursue higher education and shaped my career path.

I'm an internship coordinator and oversee the "ready to work" program at a young adult borough center, an alternative to a high school diploma program where students are labeled under-credited and over-age. I connect students with internships so they can gain transferable skills and learn to navigate work-spaces. My Purpose 8 CA was developing a contemplative practices club. I facilitate a self-care discovery class and a career readiness class every school year and tweak the ice breakers, activities, and lessons from my CA.

Before I came to MCNY, I compartmentalized a lot. As a woman of color, I was conditioned to be that way. The connections I made throughout my time at MCNY helped me realize I can be more than one thing. The difference MCNY made was that I had to grow and I couldn't make excuses anymore. The people I connected with helped me be more accountable for my life goals and figure out what I really wanted to do. My very first semester one of my professors said, "Be specific. What do you want to do?" I said, "Get my Associate's Degree," and my professor said, "That's not specific enough." With my CAs I got to explore things that I was passionate about and worked to solve problems that I thought needed attention.

Some students come to MCNY with a genuine lack of trust, they have experienced systems in ways that haven't been positive for them. They come in guarded. I came in guarded. In the mentor program, people extended themselves. They created affirming

spaces, like a sanctuary, and helped people learn how to trust others. Trust themselves. Trust the process.

My second semester, I received an e-mail that said I was nominated to be a mentor. In the mentors office we mentored each other, not just our peers. The way that people showed up for me, not just my peers but the professors and staff here, and how every time I turned around someone was sharing a resource or uplifting what I did, that was very motivating for me.

That's what made MCNY special to me– the energy and personalities that surrounded me, the way I saw my peers show up for other peers. It's like I found my tribe, so to speak.

At MCNY, I had to practice being vulnerable. When you are connecting with other people there is a certain level of vulnerability that has to happen and I was a closed person. I had to break down those walls in order to be successful.

The first CA was all about me and I was struggling. I struggled with my sense of self and the work that I did. I thought I had no weaknesses. You have to inject yourself in the CA. At first, I was writing what I believed the professor wanted to read and thought there was a



**“The transformations  
that happened  
while I was at MCNY  
continue to  
propel me to  
where I  
need to be.”**

**- Krystal Melendez**

right answer. That is not what the CA is about. It's about exploration and finding what works through trying. By Purpose 3 I realized I had to uplift the truth. It's ok if you fail, if you don't reach the goal, because you can try again.

In Purpose 6, I developed inclusive sex education materials that included sexual orientation and gender diversity. In Purpose 7, I taught a book club focusing on stories from people of color to promote positive goal setting and emotional justice for girls of color. They were all related in some way. They were centered on racial equity and I didn't realize that at the time. I recognized that after. I thought they were something separate but they really weren't.

If you do college right you should be a different person when you finish and I am a different person many times over. During this process I also mourned the old me. I had to get to know the new me. That was hard and took time.

Before MCNY, I was very shy to a fault. I held back a lot and here I was forced to come to the front, called in. Now I am more comfortable speaking explicitly and that is one of the things I am most passionate about. The transformations that happened while I was at MCNY continue to propel me to where I need to be.



**Teri Coaxum**  
**MBA Media Management '09**

- CEO and Founder of Coaxum Connects LLC
- Adjunct Professor, MCNY

I am the first member of my family to finish high school and college. Going to college was a dream. I first learned about John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where I earned a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Public Policy, when I was visiting my Aunt in East New York. Originally, I had planned to attend college in North Carolina to study political science. My goal was to become a judge, so criminal justice seemed like a better program. Before I even applied, I got a ride to New York. I had just the clothes on back and a place to stay with my Aunt. Upon arriving, I effectively became homeless because my Aunt wasn't permitted to let me move in. Another relative said I could live with them for \$50 per week rent, so I quickly found a job.

Since I had an interest in becoming a lawyer, my mentor introduced me to a contact who urged me to apply for an opening in the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office. I ended up running community relations for District Attorney Charles Hynes, which was a big responsibility and very rewarding because I had the opportunity to bring together young people and community partners to create positive change. I actually attended the MCNY campus ribbon cutting ceremony as proxy for the DA and never imagined that I would earn a second Masters at the College and become an adjunct professor here.

My experience is unique, I've worked in every single branch of government: City, State, and Federal as well as working in the Small Business Administration under the Obama Administration. I'm an author, adjunct professor and business owner. I tell everyone that my purpose in life is to empower others. I do this in many ways: giving speeches, writing, teaching, mentoring and giving back –pouring into others as MCNY poured into me.



**“MCNY is more  
than a place to be  
educated and network.  
It’s a place where  
people really  
care about you  
and your success.  
I think that’s the  
secret sauce of MCNY.”**

- Teri Coaxum

I’d been thinking about going into business after working in government and felt like I needed to specialize. I wasn’t necessarily considering an MBA. I saw an ad for MCNY on the subway, a one year MBA program with the opportunity to study abroad. That put the check in the box for me. Going to London that summer with my cohort was a great experience with all 45 of us spending time together and studying different businesses.

At first I found the MCNY MBA program very intense. I had no idea how I would be able to do a full program in one year. At the time I was the Deputy State Director for US Senator Charles Schumer. I was the first African American woman to hold that position. The professors were very accommodating in regard to my frequent travel schedule as long as I let them know ahead of time that I would be out of class and got my work in on time. MCNY professors were so accessible, working with students to help them get through the curriculum.

My classmates also helped me get notes and information I needed. Throughout the program, we all kept each other on task, making sure everyone showed up to class, supporting one another through email chat groups and having lunch to talk about the work and

see who needed help. Communication and time management are things I learned from the stringent curriculum at MCNY.

A lot of what we do at MCNY was the vision of Audrey Cohen. She knew that education was important and that it had to be focused and Purpose Centered. The curriculum at MCNY was extraordinary and exciting to me, it is very different than a traditional college. At MCNY, you learn about theory and putting it to practice in the field. With Purpose Centered Education you can look at the entire dynamic of a business, make a paradigm shift and gain experience. This type of focus helps you excel to a new level. It's important in business and also in public policy. When I was working in the Office of Advocacy in the Small Business Administration, I covered the Virgin Islands and used these skills to help small businesses look at big ideas, best practices and issues. I incorporate my professional experience in the classroom, sharing it with my students.

When you come to a place like MCNY you have such a great experience and naturally share it with others. My oldest daughter is also an alumna. She worked and initially thought college wasn't for her until she realized she did need a degree. She came to MCNY to get an Associate's Degree and ended up earning a Master's in Public Affairs and Administration. MCNY has legacy families like ours, bringing generations along. MCNY is more than a place to be educated and network. It's a place where people really care about you and your success. I think that's the secret sauce of MCNY.

Get more of  
Teri's story at  
[mcny.edu/powerofpurpose](http://mcny.edu/powerofpurpose)

# Marricka Scott-McFadden

## MPA '13

- Bronx Deputy Borough President
- MCNY Adjunct Professor



I earned my Bachelor's Degree at Lehman College where I majored in History because I liked it and was doing well in the courses. I also had to declare a minor, so I chose political science because it went with the courses I'd been taking. My decisions then were based on what I enjoyed doing and learning. Today it seems one has to be more focused in college and degrees are more specialized.

I worked my way through college. While working at a bank, a customer who was a lawyer and clerked for a judge offered me an internship. Although I liked working with her, I realized I didn't want to be a lawyer. This same person recommended me for a position at an elected official's office in the New York State Assembly where I got my start in public service. I went on to work for ten years in the New York State Assembly.

Another role I really enjoyed was Deputy Chief Clerk of the Board of Education; I ran the Bronx office. At that point in my career, I was quite successful as a public servant and it became clear to me that this was something I wanted to maintain. I thought strategically about my career and realized the next step was earning an advanced degree. I was married, had a young child and a lot of things to consider in order to pursue a degree. My biggest concern was time.

A friend was a graduate of the MCNY MPA program so I decided to look at MCNY first because she finished in one year. The program seemed different than anything I had ever done academically and professionally. I thought, "I don't know if I am going to be able to finish." On the first day in class, we were talking about the process and how you complete the CA. The professor laid out a map with benchmarks of the work. I'm someone who likes organization, deadlines and a strict mandate. It was great to know what I was supposed to accomplish and also that the professors were supporting me in this effort. On day one I realized, "I will finish, wow I can do this!"

I hadn't been in a classroom in ten years and the rigorous academic environment was slightly intimidating. I did a self-assessment and decided to take advantage of the writing center at MCNY because although I did a lot of writing at work it wasn't academic writing. The review of my first assignment proved to be fine and I was relieved. As a professor, I encourage my students to do the same and tell them it's ok to ask for help.

MCNY has given me the opportunity to teach. As a student I wasn't thinking of myself as a teacher. MCNY has really great professors who have had great careers in the real world so it made me see how my extensive experience in government could be shared with students. MCNY allowed me to change this perception of myself as a professional in public service, that not only can I wear the 9-5 hat of public service but that I can be in education and share my experience and knowledge. I tell people when you come to MCNY you will meet people, professors and other students, who will be helpful to you in your career.

I've been an adjunct professor in the MPA program at MCNY for three years and I enjoy bringing the real world to the classroom, talking about events in public service and watching students click into leadership roles. Purpose Centered Education is conceptually



**“Getting my MPA sort of coalesced my career. My work and the credential solidify my career. It gives me an opportunity to share my experience with others - me and my degree we go hand in hand.”**

**- MARRICKA SCOTT-MCFADDEN**

different than anything I'd heard of before. I think this model is perfect for students who may be left out of more traditional models because it is focused and centered on a student's passion, feeding their purpose and creating successful graduates. The model combines purpose and passion, helping students accelerate and have a higher level of comprehension.

I'm currently the Bronx Deputy Borough President. Through this role, I get to help drive public policy, particularly within office budgetary matters. Given my career history with the State Assembly, I also participate in advocating for legislation. In addition, I serve as a designee of the New York City Employee Retirement System Pension Board. And I represent the Borough President at times when he is not available. I have over 20 years of experience in government and to me, getting my MPA sort of coalesced my career. My work and the credential solidify my career. It gives me an opportunity to share my experience with others – me and my degree we go hand in hand.



**Kayo Kudo**  
**MSEd '16**

- Elementary and Special Education Teacher,  
Japanese Teacher, PS 147



originally, I was going to become a teacher in Japan where I am from. I earned my BA in Tokyo. I came here to study abroad during a master's program and to learn about the education system in America. Then life turned left, turned right, and I ended up not becoming a teacher.

My son was born in 2006 and I began teaching him Japanese at home. I was also working at the Japanese consulate and teaching Japanese at a school on Saturdays. I really enjoyed teaching and was wishing I could do it full-time. My wish was also to go back to Japan one day and become a teacher there. I hadn't really been interested in teaching here. I found out that there was a school in Bushwick, Brooklyn, PS 147, that had started a Japanese dual Japanese language program. I thought that if I could teach Japanese culture and language, I might be interested in becoming a teacher in America.

I met a couple of the people who founded the program at PS 147 and told them I was interested in teaching. They interviewed me, really liked me, and said they would hire me if I got my teaching license. About 3 months later, I quit my job and decided to come to MCNY because they had an accelerated Masters of Education elementary school teacher certificate program.

I realized it would be hard to do this program part-time. Student teaching requires long hours. I knew that at some point in my life I would have to quit my job to go back to graduate school. If that was going to be the case, I wanted to do it in a short period of time so that the amount of time not earning money would be shorter. I looked at a couple of programs. The MCNY location was perfect for me and I also liked that I could get a double license; general and special education, in 3 semesters. The MCNY admission process was really fast, everyone was accommodating and helpful. I started school shortly after applying.



**“MCNY fully prepared me for all of my licensing exams and helped me to become an effective teacher.”**

**-Kayo Kudo**

I really liked that we had a cohort of students at MCNY. If I had decided to go to a large school, I would have just taken classes and done my own thing. In the School for Education we had a close community, a family, where everyone was going through the experience together so we could share and support one another. The MCNY professors were also very supportive. In Purpose-Centered Education, you have a goal and a clear objective and the whole experience connects you to your goal. There was a purpose and a meaning to why you had to take a class first and there was communication about the next classes. There was also a connection among the courses in the same semester so there is a holistic experience about the way students learn. It made my experience as a graduate student meaningful.

A lot of the assignments were heavy on field experience and at the same time connected to what we were learning in the classroom. As we were learning about educational theory, the assignment was to pick one theory, try to use it in the classroom to see how it works and then write about it. The CA process was like writing a thesis paper every semester. Learning about theory in a text book is one thing, but we could immediately see through trial and error how it works in the real world.

MCNY Professors have relationships at schools and helped to organize good placements for student teaching. I had a great experience as a student teacher in an Integrated Co-Teaching Class where students with learning disabilities learn alongside general education students. I was able to learn from two amazing teachers who mentored me really well. I was also able to build relationships, bond with my students, do more things as a teacher, and have a great time. My professors prepared me extremely well for the licensing exams and were very supportive. MCNY's structure helps prepare students for the field. If you are committed to a life change and to becoming an educator, this program is for you.

As a teacher, I feel like I am doing everything I wanted to do and more. My school has the first Japanese dual language program in New York State. We built the program from the bottom up, it's like a start-up business and we made it to meet our students' needs and the community's needs. I was the only Japanese teacher at first and I became the lead teacher. It's rewarding to create and support a community through my school. I try to create global citizens and hope that my students carry with them a better understanding and respect of other cultures. MCNY fully prepared me for all of my licensing exams and helped me to become an effective teacher.



**Dr. Joseph Asbery**  
**MPA Emergency and  
Disaster Management '12**

- Emergency Manager, Federal Emergency  
Management Agency (FEMA) Region II

- Professional Photographer and  
Content Creator

- EdD, Saint John Fisher College '15

I joined the military because it appealed to me as a young child. My military career began in 1990 with the Army National Guard, and then I was later commissioned via ROTC in the Quartermaster Corps as a Second Lieutenant. I served in various leadership and staff assignments in the U.S., Europe, Asia, Iraq and Qatar. While I was on active duty, I was preoccupied with my military career and I wasn't focused on my "civilian education". It wasn't until I retired in 2010 that I realized I still had a whole life ahead of me.

Post military, I was hired by the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Despite having the perfect skill set for this position, I wanted to know more about emergency management. I chose Metropolitan College of New York (MCNY) because the College offered a graduate degree in Emergency and Disaster Management and was a short walk from my job-site.

At the time, I had just left the Army and was dealing with severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I had to learn to have patience. I had to be a little more compassionate and diplomatic toward non-veteran students and others around me. Specifically, not being rigid about my expectations as I was accustomed to while in the Army. As a former officer, I had to learn that I did not have general or direct authority anymore and that I couldn't rush outcomes. My driving force was to become a better Joseph Asbery. The driving force for going back to school was to build a better life post-military.

My initial goal was to just to earn a master's degree but my brother, Dr. David Asbery, graduated with his doctoral degree at St John Fisher College. Rather than getting a second master's degree with the remainder of my GI Bill, I decided to pursue my doctoral degree by following my brother's footsteps and attend the same Doctoral in Executive Leadership program at the St John Fisher College. As siblings often are, I was both competi-

tive and inspired by my brother. Most veterans, as do adults going back to college, need their family and friends as support during their academic journey. I almost quit my doctoral studies when I was nearly at the end. I was so tired and my patience meter was on empty. However, I had my squad of family (specifically, my brother), friends, and cohorts. In the midnight hour, this was a godsend. My brother helped ease my mind as he had the same experience. He put things into perspective with respect to the writing my dissertation.

While transitioning to civilian life, an advisor explained that a hobby would be helpful in the lifestyle adjustment experienced by many service members. As a child, I always had an interest in photography. Later in life, photography helped me see the beauty of life again. It allowed me to be creative and, be “Joe Asbery” again. Currently, my passion for photography has morphed from a hobby to a professional business. I am the owner of SharpLens Photography, LLC. (The Asbery Group) which is a NYS Certified Veteran Owned and NYC Minority Owned Business and co-owner of Studio1 Production.

Another one of my life goals was to become a college professor. While serving in the military, I discovered I had a knack for teaching, training, and instruction. The Emergency and Disaster Management program at MCNY



**“My advice to veterans who are on the fence about going back to school... Look within yourself to find that same spark you had when you entered the military and use it to start your academic journey. Knowledge is power.”**

- Dr. Joseph Asbery

continues to evolve as strategies for planning, safety, emergency preparedness, and rescue tactics change. As a professor practicing in the field, I am a key part of bringing those changes to the program and its students.

MCNY is also a place for networking. I have met some phenomenal people who have helped open new doors for me. Having a network of connections is very important in the world of emergency management. Once the class is over, I have students for life. Students walk away with more than a degree. They have purpose and become critical thinkers. MCNY is a college with a solid sense of community that helps returning service members in completing their studies and graduating. In the four years I have been teaching at MCNY, all of the veteran students in my curriculum have graduated or are on track to finish their studies. A veteran's shared experience goes a long way.

My advice to veterans who are on the fence about going back to school is that this benefit of ours is something to take advantage of. We have one life to live and our choices impact a good portion of our lives. Look within yourself to find that same spark you had when you entered the military and use it to start your academic journey. Knowledge is power.

**Britt Minott**  
MBA Health Services & Risk  
Management '16,  
BBA Healthcare Systems  
Management '15  
- Benefits Specialist, Visiting Nurse Service



I grew up in the Bronx at a time when New York was going through a lot of change. I am here today seeing those changes in effect. I'm a baby boomer and so much has happened in my lifetime. I decided to go back to school in my later years because although I had a lot of skills, everyone wants you to have a degree. My daughter went to MCNY and received her Bachelor's in 2004. That was another reason I decided on the College, I was familiar with the curriculum. I already knew what the CA was and I liked that MCNY was geared towards people who work. My daughter liked that she could go full time in the evening, that the College had a Bronx campus, smaller classes, and an intimate setting. She liked that there were resources like the Learning Enhancement Center and that professors were interested in their students' success. I found all she told me of the College to be true.

One of my fondest memories was the first day of class. I saw that there were a lot of other people who were more seasoned like myself; students were diverse in age. At MCNY, you find people on the same road as you. The people who you study with become your friends and we're still friends now. I also made friends with the professors. You can ask them things and they aren't too busy to help you out. They are regular people who not only give you knowledge but also their experience. They know their stuff and they can teach it. MCNY is rigorous and you have to do things fast. However, the curriculum is well taught and very current. I have come across students who transferred from other schools and say their previous schools were no match for MCNY. I tell people all the time that I got an excellent education.

I have worked in every facet of corporate America and also have experience in the healthcare field. While I was in school, I was working as a Medical Assistant at a doctor's office and my first CA was on eliminating patient wait time. By the end of my CA, I reduced patient wait time by thirty percent. I even took my ideas to the

**"I would like to add a word of encouragement to people thinking about coming to MCNY, especially people who are more seasoned like I am: you can do it. It can be done."**

**- Britt Minott**



doctors I worked with, they used my suggestions, and they worked. Right now I'm working with Visiting Nurse Service as a Benefits Specialist. I had to be trained for my job, but didn't need much training because of what I learned at MCNY. The person training me said, "I gave you the crash course and you have it down already."

For my last CA, we had to create a model of a health facility. I decided I would create an assisted living facility in Virginia for adults with autism. I found that outside of New York there are very few places that are resources for people with autism. At first, I thought it would be a great topic for a CA, but as I learned more about how the government treats people with autism and thought about those who I knew when I was growing up and those who when their caretaker passes away have nowhere to go, it hit me. My daughter lives in Virginia, and when I retire we would like to create the facility and make it a family business. The instructions and research are already in my CA. I sent it to my daughter to look it over and told her to look at it like a manual so she could see what we're going to do.

At MCNY you have to be ready to work but there are people to help you. There are resources that will help

you through if you're having a tough time. My advice to students is to align yourself with people who are on the same road you are, who are like minded, and want to go forward like you do. Use the resources that are available. I have always loved to learn and have a thirst for knowledge. The research at MCNY has taken me to a whole different level in how I see the world and what's happening in the world.

I would like to add a word of encouragement to people who are thinking about coming to MCNY, especially people who are more seasoned like I am: you can do it. It can be done. You'll enjoy it. They always say, you can't take knowledge away. It's a true sense of accomplishment and satisfaction when it's all said and done. It's a wonderful journey; it's not an easy journey, but the school makes it adventurous and interesting. Go for it. You can do it.



**Michael  
Goodwin**

**BPS '12, MPA '13**

- MCNY Adjunct Professor

wanted to go back to school and start a non-profit program. Even though my background was in program development, I knew I needed to get my degrees to reach my goal. Back in 2009, I already had a career in counseling and real estate. After the real estate market crashed, I was working in a warehouse. I remembered MCNY from an information session I went to with a friend in the '90s and that's how I ended up venturing from Pennsylvania to the College.

I had no clue what Purpose Centered Education meant initially. The one thing that grabbed me was the accelerated courses and the curricula which solidified my decision to come to MCNY. They included everything I wanted to do and my courses were directly related to my degree. At first, I was a little apprehensive and hesitant, but once I started Purpose 1 it all began to flow and started to fit together. With the Constructive Action, you learn something and put it right into play. I had experience in my professional life and Purpose Centered Education taught me another aspect to my work and enhanced my skills.

During both my undergraduate and master's degrees, my internship was in New Jersey, so at the time I would go from Pennsylvania to New Jersey to New York. My internship gave what I was doing in class a reason; it made it make sense. For my graduate CA, I worked with Health and Human Services for the City of Paterson, New Jersey and the focus was on informing and sustaining collaboration to improve the quality of life in the urban city. I connected city stakeholders: local nonprofits, city officials, businesses, and residents to resolve citywide issues through collaboration. My thought was if we could bring these groups together we could have more of an impact. Paterson is the third largest city in New Jersey and is high in crime. I developed and managed a downtown cleanup and had police educate and work with neighborhood watch associations. I also created a central form of communication for Paterson by creat-

ing a Facebook page that is still active today. When hurricane Sandy hit, I helped create a connection between the city and a food pantry to provide people with necessities during the power outages.

I was fortunate enough to do extremely well as an MCNY student. I got an A on every CA I completed from the beginning of my undergraduate program to the end of my graduate program. That's 10 semesters of straight As. I was a speaker at my undergraduate commencement and I was encouraged to continue at MCNY as an adjunct professor. Being an adjunct wasn't even in the scope of what I saw for myself after graduation but as it turned out, it was a natural fit for me.

As an adjunct, I can share my experiences and some of the things I've learned. I love teaching and providing education to help individuals get that aha moment. MCNY doesn't have the recognition it should and my goal is to work with students to get them to a place where they're recognized as well. My counseling experience comes in play when I try to get students to believe that they have the ability to do something with their degree and what they create.

I always knew I liked working with people and the College confirmed that for me. My time at MCNY



**"I will  
do as much  
as I can to  
help MCNY  
grow and get the  
recognition I believe  
we should have  
for the work we do  
and how we transform  
the students  
who come here."**

- Michael Goodwin

evolved into something I really found valuable and I now have multiple avenues to explore that passion with students, with alumni, and in preparing for my second Master's in Higher Education Administration. I'm looking to continue in higher education as a dean or director of student services or academic affairs.

I have gratitude for MCNY and gratitude for Audrey Cohen because her concept was just great. When you leave MCNY your perspective and the way you view things totally changes. I no longer look at things at face value. At MCNY you're taught to go behind what you see with context and I tell my students to always unpack the layers.

I still get emails from my students four years ago telling me about their promotion. My experience as an MCNY adjunct professor has been so rewarding. It just confirms where I think my place should be and that's in higher education.

MCNY has such wealth of knowledge and has offered so much to people. It's incredible how others don't know about it. The College is like my home. I will do as much as I can to help MCNY grow and get the recognition I believe we should have for the work we do and how we transform the students who come here.

**Flor-Maria  
Grant**  
MBA General  
Management '18

- Investigator, State of  
New Jersey Department  
of Treasury-Division  
of Taxation



**T**he dean of my high school once said to me, “You need to walk right back out the doors that you just came through because you are never going to graduate.” It was rude but I am appreciative of those words because she dared me to defy the odds. Many of the students here at MCNY come from the inner-city and have probably had a similar experience. As a teenager, I did not make the best choices. I had to figure out my own path. The military was my defense to get out and survive. I intended to enlist for four years but going back to my community in Brooklyn wasn’t an option since none of the risks there had changed. Becoming a single parent ended up being what dictated my future. My daughter and military career gave me purpose. When you bring a child into this world, you make the sacrifices you need to make it so that they have the best possible opportunity to succeed. My daughter is intelligent, confident and successful.

My decision to go back to school was not easy. Twenty-four years in the military gave me a great cushion with benefits that included the GI Bill. I had sustained many injuries and needed knee replacements and spinal surgery. This was a physiological blow and forced me to retire early from my civilian job at the New Jersey Department of Taxation. I had to find a new direction. While researching colleges, I stumbled upon MCNY and was drawn in because of its attention to veterans. My transition to civilian life was hard. I needed a college that was military friendly.

At orientation, I learned about Purpose Centered Education. There’s a big difference when you’re learning and understand the PURPOSE of what you are learning and how it can impact your life and the lives of others. I quickly realized that my purpose was giving back to at-risk youth. When I was a teenager I wasn’t considered at-risk, I was considered a truant. I was just BAD. It was the darkness in my past that propelled me to change my life and gives me the strength to work with others to do the same. I



**"I never thought that I  
would be where I am.  
Is this  
really me?  
Everyone said that I  
was not supposed to  
get here.  
Yet, here I am.."**

**-Flor-Maria Grant**

never thought that I would be where I am. Is this really me? Everyone said that I was not supposed to get here. Yet, here I am.

Over the years, I have volunteered and worked for programs like the Boys and Girls Club. The positive role models that these kids see most often are not people who have come from the same backgrounds or communities they have. Having the opportunity to have a mentor who shares a similar story is more encouraging and aspirational. The Constructive Action for my MBA was modeling a life and career coaching organization. I want to develop a career coaching program for inner-city teens to give them the emotional encouragement they need to succeed in life. It would help kids learn how to interview, write resumes and instill confidence. I never knew why I lacked confidence. It's because kids like me were written off. They don't have the proper guidance. In 1980, a guidance counselor told me that I would never amount to anything.

Unfortunately, many of these kids hear this at school and in their household. How do you excel when all you hear is that "you will fail"? It is a self-fulfilling prophecy...my peers fell into it and I ran away from it. The talent in inner-city teens is hardly noticed and most often not developed.

What is different about MCNY, is not the ads on the train. Coming here reiterated the fact that I have value. All of the things that I thought I couldn't do, MCNY allowed me to realize that I can do. The MCNY faculty and administration work with you to help you meet your goals and make your education work for you. I encourage everyone I know to go back to school. There are people that I still speak to from my old neighborhood. I share my experience with them and let them know that at MCNY you will see and meet people who are like you. Just because you never left the neighborhood doesn't mean that you can't leave it to go to school! People think that this is it. Living for the moment. Time will tell it all. Don't give up on yourself. It's in your heart. Just follow it.

**Yussuf Khan**  
MBA Media  
Management '14  
- President, The Shadow League



I first learned about Metropolitan College of New York in 2009 when a co-worker of mine invited me to speak at a graduate class in Media Management that she was taking at the College. At that time, I held a well-paying job at ESPN and since graduating from college in 1993 had no thoughts about going back to school. After speaking with the class and the professor, I was impressed by both the diversity of the students and the flexible model of the overall MCNY program. I began to think about my MBA and how it could allow me to teach and give back to others all that I had learned in my then ten-year career in the media industry. I had no notion that the program at MCNY would also help me in my evolving career in sports media.

I met with Tilokie Depoo, the head of the business school, and he encouraged me to enroll in the Media Management MBA Program, which I did in early 2012. I remember my first few classes. It was culture shock. Here I was back in school after twenty years with a diverse group of students of all ages, backgrounds and life stages. Although I had a more traditional educational background than many of my classmates, in that I went straight from high school to college, I was moved by the life stories of some of the older students. I remember graduation day, watching one woman receive her diploma. She was crying, saying, I never thought I could do it. I never thought I could do it. In my family it was a given you would graduate high school and continue on to college. For this woman, MCNY was a life changer and a true vehicle of empowerment.

At MCNY, I gradually learned to appreciate that what I was learning in the classroom could, indeed, help me in my every day job and chosen field. The MCNY professors are not just academics but also working professionals with hands-on experience in the fields they are teaching. While at MCNY, and still today, I was running The Shadow League, a multi-media company which covers sports through a cultural perspective. My education at MCNY taught me some valuable lessons, such as how to use common sense

research instead of paying for expensive external research companies. MCNY also taught me an academic approach that I employ to this day in managing the growth of the company. My thought process is different now, and the lessons I learned at the College have made me a better, more effective business leader.

In thinking about MCNY and why it worked for me, in addition to its great professors and unique curriculum, two features MCNY offered me and other students really stand out; flexibility and options. Through the entire two and a half years of my graduate program, I was a part-time student, worked full-time in a stressful start-up company, and was the parent of two growing boys. At MCNY I had the option of taking classes in the evening and also taking a select few online. For my Constructive Action project, I came up with an idea that ultimately ended up being The Shadow League, so the program became more seamless, timeless and personally applicable. The professors are very understanding of the burdens of full-time parenting and working and were very flexible in their assignment deadlines when extra time is needed.

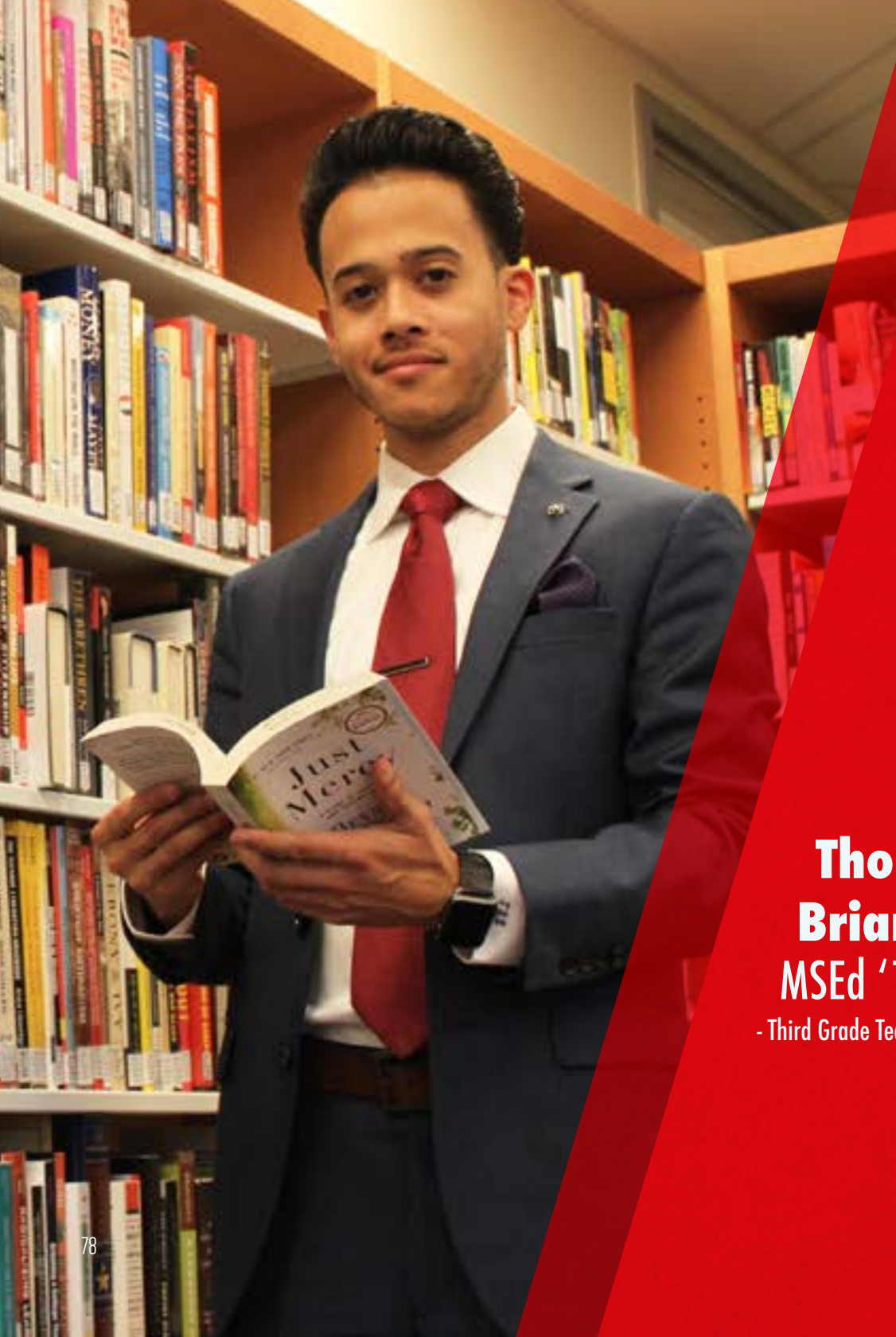
Giving back has always been a part of my upbringing. I was recently honored with the Community Service



**"The lessons  
I learned at the  
College have  
made me a  
better,  
more effective  
business  
leader."**

-Yussuf Khan

Award by the Bronx Borough President and I will continue to include a service focus in everything I do. When you are in a position to affect change and give back, you have a responsibility to do so and to help others achieve success. I do that in my job and in my life, and I look forward to becoming more involved with MCNY so that I can teach, encourage and empower others.



**Thomas  
Brian Lee**  
MSEd '17

- Third Grade Teacher, PS 1 in the Bronx



My name is Thomas Lee and I am currently a third-grade teacher at PS 1 in the Bronx. I am of Chinese and Puerto Rican heritage. Among my large extended family, I was the first to gain a Master's Degree. I grew up in New Rochelle and moved to the Bronx when I was sixteen. Directly after high school I went to Westchester Community College for a couple of semesters, then transferred to the University of Hartford where I majored in business administration.

While in college I had a paid internship at Enterprise Rent-A-Car. Upon graduation they offered me a full-time position as a management trainee. For five years, I climbed in the company and was making great money managing large operations at both JFK and LGA. Upon leaving the company, I went to work for a couple of other companies with wonderful incentives, but something was missing and I was left feeling dissatisfied. This was when I started volunteering in my church leading youth groups on Friday evenings. I had gone into business to make money and invest in myself, now my perspective shifted to investing my time in our future and the next generation, through education.

A neighbor of mine shared how she was able to obtain a Master's Degree in Education in a year, and what an enriching experience she had attending MCNY. I went to the orientation but after hearing about all the exams I would need to pass to become a certified teacher, I almost gave it up right then and there! This was on top of the fact that I had not been in the classroom for over six years. I spoke with the Dean of MCNY's Education Program and he encouraged me to apply. I was accepted conditionally due to my low GPA during my last few undergrad semesters.

The first thing I noticed during my first weeks at MCNY was the student diversity. Single moms, people with twenty-year careers, older people struggling with families



**“MCNY  
has given me the  
opportunity  
to be  
what I am  
called to be.”**

-Thomas Brian Lee

and part-time jobs, and one guy my age, all universally stressed. We became very close-knit and helped each other through. The courses required serious dedication. Luckily, MCNY offered a full, hands-on program that was oriented towards helping me become a successful classroom teacher. As I learned and studied, I became more convinced than ever I wanted to be a teacher. I wanted our youth to know they can and will do something valuable with their lives. I also understood the importance for our youth having positive minority male role models in the classroom.

MCNY placed me in an elementary school in the Lower-East Side for my student teaching. I was able to get hands-on experience in a real classroom setting four days a week. Other schools DO NOT offer this kind of direct experience. The entire experience was purposeful and had meaning that translated day one when I entered my classroom. The professors are there on the front lines with you eight days a week 25 hours a day. You are creating lessons, implementing instruction, managing the flow of the day, and getting to know these students, just like as if they were your students. Not to mention MCNY received a grant which gave students monthly metro cards while attending classes!

I graduated from MCNY in December 2017 at the top of

my class and delivered the graduation speech. I also passed all my State certifications on time. I interviewed at PS 1 in June by recommendation of MCNY and got the job as a first-grade Gen-Ed teacher. All the statistics about PS 1 were negative -- student scores, teachers resigning, etc. -- but I decided that this was where I could have the most impact. We are now the first ever school in the history of District 7 with the “lighthouse school” designation because of the extraordinary impact the school is having on staff, students, parents, and the greater community.

I loved teaching from the very beginning. It’s very hard work, especially meeting the needs of kids who come to you with all sorts of personal issues. But the kids respond to me. They know that I have their best interests at heart and that I am absolutely there for them. Someday I expect to go the administration route and become a principal but that is in the future. At the moment I’m giving everyday maximum effort to ensure I am living out my purpose as an educator.

When I was in business it was all about me and my selfish ambitions. Now I am able to make significant impact every single day I step into my classroom. Teaching is like a calling for me. I feel like I’m walking on water and I am at peace. MCNY has given me the opportunity to be what I am called to be.

Get more of  
Thomas’ story at  
[mcny.edu/powerofpurpose](http://mcny.edu/powerofpurpose)



**Delores  
Connors**  
BPS '93

- Middle School Reading and  
Special Education Teacher  
in New Jersey

I first heard of MCNY, then known as Audrey Cohen College, the College for Human Services, when I saw a sign on the train as I was going to work. I was in high school and part of a co-op program where I alternated working a week in a clerical role at Immigration Services and going to school. I thought MCNY would be wonderful because I could keep my job while in college and graduate around the same time as the rest of my high school classmates. I felt like I wouldn't be behind. To be able to go to school and work seemed like a really good package.

When I visited MCNY at the end of my senior year, it spoke to me from day one. I remember going into MCNY and feeling it wasn't what I expected of a college because the campus was in a building. I enrolled at MCNY immediately that day. The time-frame to earn a bachelor's degree was definitely appealing but something about the philosophy of MCNY seemed really intimate. When I look back it was the social consciousness piece. Once I started doing CAs, I became very much aware of the experience being bigger than just learning and that there was a piece of me that needed to grow as I was learning.

I loved Purpose-Centered Education. I think that it brought that personal piece to the schoolwork, how you are a part of a world much bigger than yourself. I really loved that about MCNY. I think there's not one MCNY alum out there who felt like they didn't have a commitment to do something connected to making the world better and that whatever you were going to do after MCNY was going to be connected to service for others. You leave MCNY feeling you have work to do in this world and were prepared to do it.

When I talk to other alumni, we all agree that the CA is a strong part of what makes MCNY so valuable. The CA process prepares you for whatever writing you have to do;

you think “I did a CA, I got this!” The demands behind the CA and the people supporting you in the process make the experience. I think back on my career and there were things that I knew I could handle because of the CA experience.

At MCNY, I felt like you could ask a professor for help if I didn’t quite understand something. I was taking statistics and had to ask for help. I was probably one of the youngest students and it was a different experience being younger than everyone. I was embarrassed at first because I had just graduated from high school and thought I needed the most help. The professors always made time for me and I never felt ashamed about going to them for help. It was definitely a big plus.

After graduating from MCNY, I felt like I had learned enough and had the academic know how so that I could go to another institution and be ready to handle it and do the work. I went to Long Island University and earned my Masters in Education. I’ve been teaching ever since. I started as a middle school social studies teacher in East New York, Brooklyn and am now teaching reading to middle school children in New Jersey.

I love teaching, I could happily die at the black board. I always wanted to be a teacher. I wanted be of service to



**“You leave  
MCNY feeling  
you have  
work to do in  
this world  
and you are  
prepared to  
do it.”**

- Delores Connors

others and at the same time have a close connection to them. I work with reluctant readers and those who are not performing the way the standard of the school or state would like. I'm also a dyslexic therapist. To work with people who don't see themselves as readers is a powerful thing. There's nothing like being able to take a student, share a story with them and watch them become avid readers. You share that experience with them, constantly pointing out their strengths and privately working on their deficiencies. Seeing their shift to becoming confident readers is a wonderful, amazing experience.

The professors are what I remember most about the College, they had a huge impact on me. I also remember seeing Audrey Cohen in her office, a little lady with perfect hair. That was special to me, seeing her there on campus. I remember thinking that the people who are so connected to this school are right here and it meant a lot. Friends of mine who were at Columbia knew of Audrey Cohen and her work to make this school exist. I remember thinking it was amazing for New York City to have MCNY. I don't know if Audrey Cohen ever imagined how big MCNY would be today.

**Tuesday  
P. Brooks**  
MBA Media  
Management '01

- Owner and CEO,  
AJOY Management Enterprise



I am an entrepreneur and agent of change. I have an entrepreneurial spirit which is more than passion and motivation. At my core is resilience. When the knocks happen and I can't see how to recover, faith and resilience is how I succeed. Losing is not an option.

I am Tuesday P. Brooks, 2001 MBA in Media Management alumna. I'm proudly born and raised in the Bronx and Owner/CEO of AJOY, a financial management firm that is committed to improving the profitability of freelancers, entrepreneurs, micro and small business owners by helping them creatively rethink planning, processes, pricing and PURPOSE. I am celebrating 10 years in business. In this economy, it is a great achievement.

My parents always had multiple side-hustles. There were challenges growing up but they didn't define who we were as a family. My mother has been a key component to a lot of the things that I have done throughout my life. Anytime she found out about something interesting, she would say, "Why don't you try this?" I remember vividly, she was working at Lehman College, and somehow ended up with an MCNY flyer. The flyer read -- One-year MBA in Media Management. My mom said, "Look at this flyer! How exciting is this that the two things you love are in one degree?" As soon as I saw the courses being offered, I knew it was for me. The fact that I could complete a business degree in one year was amazing. This MCNY MBA program brought together all of my interests neatly combined as one – education, business, media and entertainment!

As a young adult, I was whimsical and impulsive. Prior to the MBA Media Management program at MCNY, I had joined the army, graduated from Teachers College and became a New York City school teacher and completed an entrepreneurial certificate program (also brought to my attention by mom). By the time I got to MCNY, I was on an entrepreneurial journey and this program was a culmination of my earlier business



**“MCNY was a journey  
to finding my direction.  
Purpose-driven  
education  
connected me  
to my purpose.”**

-Tuesday P. Brooks

experiences merged with my background in performing arts.

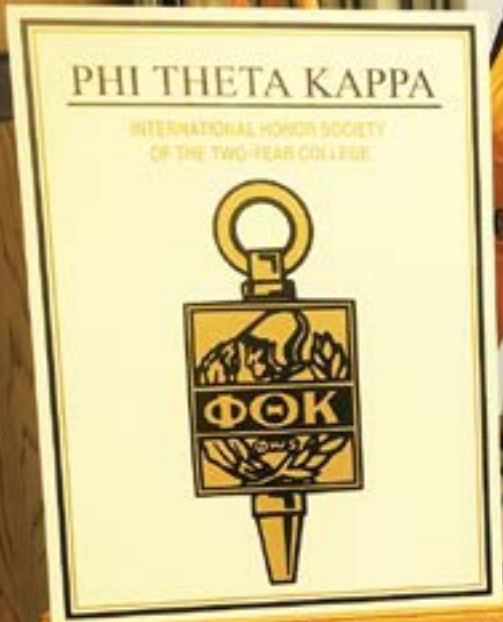
I graduated many years ago, but my foundation remains in MCNY. We are rolling out a social media campaign that will highlight how my business degree helped mold my business. Having had the opportunity to learn from, and work with, the professors that I had in the Media Management program was inspiring. They were all so experienced and steeped in their profession that I sat in awe of them. I learned from their experiences and personal growth, not from a book. Learning from an expert in their field brings a whole new dimension to learning.

In one year, I had a life-changing experience. My fondest memory was our program’s international trip to France. The film industry was on strike so we did not have an opportunity to see and do everything that had been planned at the Cannes Film Festival. However, our professors made sure that we stayed on track with the curriculum and used their connections in the industry to give us a firsthand look into the global film business. This experience gave me a life-long connection to my professors and my cohort. I have stayed in touch with many of them over the years.

My Constructive Action was an online talk show. Everything that I had learned, from one discipline to the next, came into play when it came to this project. When you talk about Purpose-Centered Education, it's really a simple concept. You learn best when you understand the purpose of your learning and how it can positively impact achieving your goal.

My current formula for hiring is a way of giving back. By utilizing the New York Summer Youth Employment Program and Work, Learn, Grow, I hire and train interns on professionalism, managing a business, obtaining clients, bookkeeping, taxes, etc. After they have completed their city program, the young adults that show the most promise are hired to continue working at AJOY. Of course, they are so amazing that they are college-bound. The turnover is high but the joy I get from seeing them succeed is immeasurable.

MCNY was a journey to finding my direction. Purpose-driven education connected me to my purpose.



**Viviana  
Gomez  
BPS '19**



I have always had an interest in human services. I obtained my bachelor's degree in August of 2019 and I feel prepared to go on to graduate school. I want to do direct care and counseling and I have decided to pursue a Master of Social Work degree to then obtain a clinical license in social work. I think some people my age are afraid of going back to school because the process can be overwhelming, but MCNY really helps. It's important to find a school that meets your needs and has a good support system. At MCNY, I really found that support.

In 2002, I signed up for Audrey Cohen College. At that time, I had a two-year-old and a two-month-old and it just didn't work out for me, but in 2016 I decided to come back. Although I had a good job without a degree, I wasn't satisfied. I wasn't growing. I didn't feel like I was fulfilling my purpose. I took a leap of faith and decided to go back to school. Despite the fact that I have four kids and was working while I was in school, I was able to reach my goal and receive a bachelor's degree with the help of MCNY.

Coming back to school after 20 years was very scary. MCNY was a good fit for me because I wanted an accelerated program. The College caters to adult learners and offers a lot of help. MCNY focused on what I wanted to specifically do. It met my needs. It got me a step closer to pursuing my clinical license in social work. A Purpose Centered Education appealed to me because not only are you learning, you're also applying what you learn as you go. That was the reason why I chose MCNY. Purpose Centered Education is something that I really believe in and I think it makes a big difference.

Every semester is different. I was lucky enough to be able to do most of my Constructive Actions based on working with youth, which is the population that I want to work with. I am a youth leader at my church. Therefore, the research and work done was personally beneficial to me, the youth, their parents, the church, and everyone involved in the organi-

zation. It's the personal connection that makes a difference.

The work I've done over the semesters has helped me grow on a professional level but also on a personal one. Every event, workshop, and seminar has served to connect theory with practice. In Purpose 6, I hosted a health fair through the church and we provided a service to the community. I also helped raise funds for the church by hosting a paint night and coordinated workshops on improving communication between parents and teens as a result of Purpose Centered Education.

I am Colombian-American. Before I was part of the church and became a youth leader, I wanted to work with adolescents, especially females, in Hispanic and minority communities. I think it's important to raise awareness for teen pregnancy prevention and to push for higher education. Many Hispanic youth come from immigrant parents who work long extended hours. As a result, a lot of responsibility falls on their older children. Many times they are left alone to watch their younger siblings, cook, and clean while their parents work. In other words, they become the primary caretaker of the household. Assuming this adult role at an early age makes it natural for them to continue in this role instead of attending college. I really believe that this is the norm in Latino communities and I



**"You want to make a difference. You hope that you can use your experience to make a change in your community and culture in general."**

-Viviana Gomez

feel like that needs to not be the norm in our culture.

That is why I love working with adolescents. I thrive off seeing young girls ask for help applying to college. They say, “Viv, help me pick a school. Help me with my classes. Help me with my schedule.” I try to be an example for them. They see how I did everything backwards. A couple of them were in college at the same time as me. I’m 40, they’re 20 and they see the difference. I tell them, “Go to school, focus, and do your thing now.” In high school, I was a C student– not because I wasn’t smart. I didn’t really care. It didn’t bother me. When I came back to school, I thought, this time I’m going to do it right and go out with a bang. I wanted to graduate with honors and I did. I graduated magna cum laude for both my degrees. My kids know that if I did it, they can definitely do it. You want to make a difference. You hope that you can use your experience to make a change in your community and culture in general.



**Shana Melius**  
**MBA Media Management '09**

- Director of Outreach and Community Engagement,  
Office of Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke
- Co-Founder, Mac-Melius Agency, Inc.
- CEO, Preserve Our Legacy, Inc.

I grew up between the Bronx, Harlem and North Carolina. I was an all-state basketball player in high school and then went to Virginia Union University, a historically black college, to play basketball. I partially tore my ACL in my sophomore year and I transferred to Temple. I graduated from Temple in 2000 with a degree in Anthropology and African American Studies.

After college I worked as a publicist and through relationships I obtained employment at Murder Inc. Records here in New York. I started as an intern and then did PR for various celebs, such as Ja Rule. I met my husband, who was a photographer, on a photo shoot. We soon started our own PR firm, Mac-Melius Agency (MMA).

In 2006 we met a little boy, Jaden, who was battling leukemia and needed a bone marrow transplant. We tried to educate the black community about the issues and to encourage bone marrow donations. Jaden died in January 2007—two weeks before a Las Vegas event where we planned to help raise awareness about bone marrow and organ donations. We started our non-profit organization, Preserve our Legacy, to promote awareness around health, treatment options and organ donation issues in diverse communities. My husband and I have diverse backgrounds. We knew that if our children got sick there would not be sufficient resources in place to help them, because diverse communities have unique challenges and are typically not well-represented in traditional bone-marrow and organ donation networks.

As we were starting Preserve our Legacy, I knew that to meet my goals and to develop that organization, I needed an MBA. For about a year I had been looking at other colleges in New York, but I didn't want to take two years to get that degree. I kept seeing MCNY ads on the train and finally came to the College to learn about it. I really liked the educational approach, the study abroad component and the fact that I could



**“Though I am personally confident person my MBA extended that confidence in my knowledge of communications, nonprofits and even government. When I see this potential in others, I know that MCNY is the right place for them.”**

-Shana Melius

complete the degree in one year while working.

Prior to MCNY, I attended two very different colleges-- a historically black university (Virginia Union) and Temple. There are two important ways that MCNY is different: the quality of the adult learning experience and the size of the classes.

The research I was required to do to complete my Constructive Action project helped me to expand my strategic thinking—it was like a vision board for charting a path for Preserve our Legacy. And I got to discuss that research with adult classmates who were building businesses of their own—that feedback was golden. I had friends who were in other MBA programs in the city at the time, and their work focused on simulated businesses or existing corporations. At MCNY, my classmates were starting their own businesses, and the classes offered a much more entrepreneurial and hands-on education. In the CA process, the professor doesn’t give you the answers you need—we had to research issues, look for resources, develop strategies and branding, all on our own. It was an amazing process. I was required to diligently research competition and examine their business practices, which prepared me to set up my business properly in addition to registering my not for profit. I would say that 60% of the organization was

developed through the CA process, including completing registration with GuideStar and other outlets for nonprofits. Learning the most effective way to research is a valuable skill that I use every day of my life.

I am an out-of-the-box thinker, and intense conversations in small classes at MCNY enhanced that ability. I continue to seek to test and refine my ideas in the same kinds of deep conversations we had in class.

When I first applied to MCNY, the admissions counselor told me that the people in my cohort would become friends for life. That has turned out to be true—and after ten years I am still close with my classmates. These relationships have led to incredible friendships and many opportunities for networking. And four of my classmates are on the board of Preserve our Legacy.

I have recommended MCNY to various students because I believe that MCNY strengthens your ability to prepare for the workforce and the business world as an entrepreneur. Though I am personally confident person, my MBA extended that confidence in my knowledge of communications, nonprofits and even government. When I see this potential in others, I know that MCNY is the right place for them.

Get more of  
Shana's story at  
[mcny.edu/powerofpurpose](https://mcny.edu/powerofpurpose)

# Gary Jenkins

## MPA '06

- Administrator of the Human Resources Administration, The City of New York
- MCNY Trustee and Adjunct Professor



I was born and raised in Brooklyn, the youngest of eight children from a single mom who always instilled in us that school is important. In addition to being an avid Brooklynite and New Yorker I have spent my entire professional career at the Human Resources Administration (HRA) trying my best to help people. I went straight from high school to college at SUNY Oswego but I left there after two years, returned home, and went to work originally as a house parent with the Administration for Children's Services. After working for a number of years I went back to school and achieved my BA Degree in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College. I am a public servant. I love helping individuals who are in need. Folks come to us not because they want to but because they need to and we are here to provide a service.

After many years at HRA, I was looking for promotional opportunities so I could move into a managerial career and I knew I needed a graduate degree. A friend told me about MCNY and in 2006 I went to the school for an orientation. To be honest, I was completely amazed. This was a college where I could fit in while still handling a full-time job and raising my family. In addition, it was a place that shared my values. Unlike Baruch or some of the other schools I was considering, MCNY had passion. It felt like me.

I started MCNY in the fall of 2006 and went straight through in one year. It was one of the toughest, most intense periods of my life. I give a lot of credit to my supportive classmates. I also had great professors. They were all available to me. They met with me, discussed my struggles with me, and were there for me.

I was thrilled by the College's small classes, not large lectures, where you interacted with your professors and your classmates. I had a cohort that stayed with me and with whom I built relationships. We went through a lot together and built a supportive bond with each other I don't think I would have gotten at any other college. Plus I loved the

entire approach of Purpose Centered Education. My Constructive Action allowed me to reorganize our approach to customer service at the City's main Medicaid Reception Center on 34th Street where I was the deputy director. We had 2.8 million clients and many of them came to us with their problems. I used my CA to devise a system in which we improved our client/staff interactions and streamlined our services when our upset clients come into the office. Mostly due to my CA and to the fact I now had a MPA, after graduation from the College I became director of the center. The work at my job and the work at school coincided. They supported each other. It was so great to see the positive things I came up with implemented and helping people.

Purpose Centered Education focuses on looking at a problem and dissecting it in the search for solutions that will hopefully address the problem at hand. MCNY allows you to bring real life work issues into the classroom break them down and come up with real solutions. At MCNY personal experiences became part of the courses. The courses adopt themselves to the needs and work of the students in that class. I encourage my colleagues to go to the orientation at MCNY and not to let the cost scare them. Everything in life has a cost. The knowledge that MCNY gave me I still use today. And thanks to my degree and MCNY I have moved up quickly.



**"The College  
accepts the person  
that you are  
and works to  
develop you  
into the  
leader  
that you  
can be."**

- Gary Jenkins

My goal is to become a commissioner at a New York City agency. I think my experience at MCNY has made such a goal possible. The College accepts the person that you are and works to develop you into the leader that you can be. I really do believe that MCNY develops leaders. The way they teach and the material that you read helps you think and become a leader. I felt welcomed there. I feel blessed to have attended MCNY. It helped elevate my professional life and it has given me some life-long friends that I still cherish today. It's one of the reasons I am now an adjunct professor at MCNY. I wanted to teach in an environment that changes lives, changes the lives of people that look like me.

Get more of  
Gary's story at  
[mcny.edu/powerofpurpose](http://mcny.edu/powerofpurpose)



**Adlette  
Charmant-Olivier**

**BPS '00, MPA '02**

- Coordinator for Operations,  
Adapt Community Network

**& her daughter**

**Cassiana Laventure**

**Student, BBA  
Healthcare Management**

- Student Services Student Worker  
- Owner of CLS Events, CL Stylings, and Maison De Gateux

**Adlette:**

□ didn't go looking for MCNY, at that time it was Audrey Cohen College. Audrey Cohen College came to me! I was working for the YMCA of Greater New York, and someone from the College gave a presentation about the program. I was very interested right then and there. I made an appointment and applied. And I received a presidential scholarship! I started right away and what I liked about the College was that it was like life, it wasn't only a bookish thing.

**Cassiana:** Do you mean the way that every Purpose (semester) is aligned to what you will be doing in your field?

**Adlette:** Yes, to what you will be doing or what you are already doing! The College was real life—you have life experiences that you bring to the classes, and you have what you learn and bring it back outside to your life and your work. It was like a good marriage because everything was intertwined. I could see how every Purpose was related to my life and to my work. I wasn't just studying things I would never use again. And I came right back to get my Master's in Public Administration. My husband was very supportive and said "don't stop, just keep on going."

My education helped me immensely in my career. At Adapt Community Network, where I now work, I started as a Resident Director, and whenever I didn't have a case manager I had to do the case management, which I knew how to do from my program. And for each one of the people who live with us, we have to develop a holistic document, it is exactly like a Constructive Action about each person! Everything fell right into place for me because of how well Purpose-Centered Education aligned with my work. I moved up to the coordinator of supportive housing and now I am the coordinator of operations. And now my daughter is at the College!

**Cassiana:** I didn't enroll in the College because of my mother. I learned about MCNY in a taxicab. I had recently lost a position in a dentist's office in Westchester, and I got into a cab and the driver was telling me about his school, which was MCNY. It sounded amazing so I did a little research, I walked in and I signed up. I told my mother, and she said that's my school! I didn't know that Audrey Cohen College and MCNY were the same. And now, two years later, I am about to finish my degree. I will be completing my last Purpose in my undergrad education in spring 2020.

There are a lot of things I love about the College. One of them is the scheduling, it is perfect. I have a young daughter and I have the flexibility to take classes at nights or in the mornings. And it is a very family-oriented community. I now work in Student Services, so I am very close to everyone, but even before I worked here it felt like a family. I am also in the Welfare to Careers program, and in that office too, everyone is very close and very helpful to each of us.

My Constructive Actions in the Business program helped me figure out where I wanted to go, and that I want to help underserved communities in the area of health. In two of my CA projects, one in Creating Organizations and the other in Financial Management, I



**"I have always been told that you can get your education in a book but if you don't share it with anyone it doesn't matter.."**

- Cassiana Laventure

learned that I can build an organization that can help people in underserved communities learn what no one tells them about—how to get better treatment or less expensive treatment. I can give them options to choose from about nutrition and health care, and I can make a difference in the community. I plan to enroll in the new Master’s in Community Health program in fall 2020.

**Adlette:** I am glad she brought this subject up. When I graduated from undergrad, the Y was getting out of the residence business. So I transitioned to a community-based organization to do health education and coordinate the peer educator program. I used to bring Cassiana to health fairs and educational events for the African-American community.

**Cassiana:** So I have been in training for this for a long time! It’s come full-circle. I have always been told that you can get your education in a book but if you don’t share it with anyone it doesn’t matter.

**Adlette:** Of course, it’s like having a book and you never open it!

**Cassiana:** I came to MCNY to spread what I learned.

**Adlette:** When I was at the College, everything was focused on empowerment. It empowered the students who will later be the CEOs, or the case managers, it empowers you to bring the knowledge you have to out to society.

**Cassiana:** I would agree. I feel very empowered, and I am not done yet. MCNY makes you feel that your dreams are possible. I like that the students are adults, and parents, who are serious about their education. The College empowers adult students, that is its main focus.

**Adlette:** Everyone at the College makes you feel that you are all in this together. From Dean Crookendale to everyone, we are all in it together. You can stop by everyone's office, you can stop by, you don't need an appointment. They encouraged me to do more, and be the best. It was education without borders. Education and opportunity without borders.

**Cassiana:** And it is still like that today—a family and we are all in it together.



Get more of  
Adlette & Cassiana's story at  
<http://bit.ly/MCNYalumni>



# History

# Timeline



**1967**

NYC Board of Education creates Teacher Assistant position due to the work the Women's Talent Corps.



**1971**

The College for Human Services gains full accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.



**1983**

The College begins offering Business programs.

**1985**  
The College opens extension centers in the Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island.



**1986**

The first extension center in the Bronx opens.

**1964**

Following President Lyndon B. Johnson's declaration of the War on Poverty in his State of the Union address, founder Audrey Cohen developed the Women's Talent Corps which was incorporated in New York State as a non-profit organization.

**1979**

The College is approved by New York State to offer Bachelor's degrees.

1960



**1970**

The Women's Talent Corps becomes the College for Human Services, chartered by New York State and approved to offer the Associate of Administration degree. Audrey Cohen serves as President.



**1988**

The first Master's program, Master's in Administration, is approved and offered.



**1992**

The College is renamed Audrey Cohen College in honor its founder.



**1999**

Stephen Greenwald is named President.



The Masters of Science in Education program and the Master of Public Administration in Emergency and Disaster Management are offered.

**2007**

Joan Straumanis serves as Interim President.



**2008**

2008 Vinton Thompson is appointed President.



**2012**

MCNY reopened an extension center in the South Bronx.

**1997**

The first Masters in Business program is launched.

**2020**

**1996**

Founder Audrey Cohen dies at age 64.



Alida Mesrop becomes President.



**2002**

The Welfare to Careers program, which supports low-income students to attain academic and career success, is launched. This highly successful program continues today.



**2016**

Two permanent campuses, at 60 West Street in Manhattan and 463 E. 149th Street in the Bronx, are opened.



# **BUILDING A BETTER WORLD:** **A Short History of Metropolitan College of New York**

Grace G. Roosevelt

**T**he MCNY alums featured in this book are all working with a purpose. They feel empowered by their work, and they are acting constructively to improve the world. Such outcomes are not accidental. Purpose, empowerment, and constructive action have been the guiding themes of the educational programs offered at Metropolitan College for over 50 years.

Originally named the Women's Talent Corps, Metropolitan College of New York (MCNY) was founded in 1964 by educational pioneer Audrey Cohen. Inspired by the ideals of the civil rights and women's movements of the 1950s and '60s, Cohen's vision was to create an educational institution that would purposefully empower disadvantaged women to take constructive actions in human service agencies. Cohen's aim was to bring together low-income women and women already in the helping professions in a way that would improve the human services agencies – the welfare programs, schools, and hospitals – that affect so much of city life.

To build the reality necessary to fit Cohen's vision was never easy. In the early years Cohen and her colleagues wrote hundreds of letters, petitioned, and marched; they visited low-income neighborhoods at night and lobbied in Washington by day. But they persevered, and in 1966 the Women's Talent Corps received funding from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), the key administrative branch of president L.B. Johnson's War on Poverty.

The initial OEO grant enabled the Women's Talent Corps to sprout and to grow. The tuition-free program prepared motivated women for jobs in their communities and at the same time created a new level of "paraprofessional" positions such as teacher's assistant, guidance counselor assistant, and paralegal throughout the five boroughs of New York City. At the heart of the Women's Talent Corps' program was the commitment to meld field experience with academic learning. After an initial orientation period, all of the "Corpswomen," as they were called, were placed in human service agencies where they received hands-on training while also attending workshops and more formal academic studies at the Women's Talent Corps headquarters on lower Broadway.

To this day, MCNY students are either placed in, or use their jobs for, field-based experiences that enable them to apply what they learn in the classroom to socially-useful work. As Cohen once wrote, "Unlike traditional educational approaches that separate learning from its use, Metropolitan College of New York's approach links learning directly to action. Students learn in order to use what they learn, and they use what they learn to reach specific goals. This gives them an appreciation for how deeply they can affect the world around them and builds a lifelong interest in learning" (Cohen & Jordan, 1996, p. 33).

A related principle was to de-emphasize the strict divisions between academic disciplines and to focus on connective learning. The Women's Talent Corps curriculum included a wide range of studies – a sampling of Greek mythology, selected texts in political theory, lots of sociology and psychology, some economics – chosen again with an eye to each subject's applicability rather than its adherence to a specific academic major. And this too has remained a constant over the years: MCNY students rarely ask, "Why do we have to read this?" The connection between theory and practice is a closely held commitment at the College.

A third commonality between the Women’s Talent Corps in the 1960s and MCNY today is the demographics of the student body. Then as now, the institution Audrey Cohen founded has attracted mostly female, minority students –adult women of color – who have families and often jobs, and who are making huge sacrifices to go back to school. By 1969, the Women’s Talent Corps began admitting men and added a second year of programming. It continued to expand in scope, and in 1970, when it was granted a Charter to award Associate Degrees by the New York State Board of Regents, it was renamed the College for Human Services.

As the optimistic 1960s became the tumultuous 1970s, however, the fledgling institution faced new challenges. Students and faculty grumbled about power structures and communication processes, and in 1972 the College (like 450 other colleges, universities, and high schools that year) experienced a strike. Cohen’s own office was taken over by a group of angry students demanding her resignation. But Cohen was determined to turn the crisis into an opportunity. The questions raised by the strike led to a year-long curricular overhaul that resulted in the College for Human Services becoming a fully accredited institution offering a Bachelor’s Degree.

Generic to the newly-transformed college was a conceptual framework that is now called Purpose-Centered Education (PCE) and that continues today to be the hallmark of MCNY’s educational offerings. In Purpose-Centered Education, each semester has a specific competency or Purpose that all five courses taken that semester relate to. The courses themselves are thus taught as “dimensions” of each semester’s Purpose, and the course content is often trans-disciplinary – combining, for example, readings from literature and psychology or history and philosophy. Most importantly, students are required to use the knowledge gained each semester to complete a specific project – what the College calls a Constructive Action – in a human service agency, school, or

business, and to document that process in a systematic way. As currently defined, a Constructive Action is a “planned effort to use knowledge in effective action.”<sup>1</sup> It is a project undertaken in a field setting that has a specific, constructive aim relating to that semester’s Purpose. The setting may be as obscure as the Paradise Transitional Housing Program or as well-known as the New York Hospital for Special Surgery. The action may involve counseling sessions with one individual or a restructuring project for a whole organization. The scope may be as small as teaching a paraplegic how to use a toothbrush or as large as renovating a park in the Bronx. As Audrey Cohen always emphasized, in some way, a Constructive Action should aim to improve the world.

The uniqueness of MCNY’s Purpose-Centered Educational model was recognized early on in a survey of higher education made by sociologists Gerald Grant and David Riesman. For their 1978 book *The Perpetual Dream: Reform and Experiment in the American College*, Grant and Riesman visited more than 400 colleges and universities where recent changes had occurred. Out of those 400 the authors chose six to focus on, with the College for Human Services exemplifying what the authors called “telic” reform, that is, innovation based on a distinctive *telos* or purpose.

By the late 1970s Cohen was receiving accolades and honors for her educational vision, but she continued to set her sights higher. When federal funding became unreliable, the College was forced to cut its previous ties with the U.S. Department with Labor, and that meant it now needed to charge tuition. Nevertheless, the College continued to grow. In 1983 it added business programs to its offerings, and in 1988, added its first graduate program, a Master of Administration (today a Master of Public Administration). In the late 1980s Cohen began to hope that she could extend the model of Purpose-Centered Education into elementary schools throughout the country.

But fate intervened in the form of an invasive cancer that cut short Cohen's plans to broaden her visionary reach. After years of courageously fighting the disease, Cohen died in 1996, at the age of 64. "Ms. Cohen was a powerhouse of energy when scorning the rigidity and failures of the contemporary educational system and proposing how to reform it," the New York Times obituary stated. The Board of Trustees appointed the College's dedicated dean, Alida Mesrop, as interim president.

In recognition of its founder's pathbreaking work, the College had been re-named Audrey Cohen College in 1992. A decade later, under the leadership of Stephen Greenwald, the College was renamed again as Metropolitan College of New York (MCNY) to reflect the growth, vitality and diversity that the institution shares with the city in which it is located. Continuing its emphasis on purpose, empowerment, and constructive action, the College added both a Masters in Childhood Education program and an Emergency and Disaster Management program early in the new century. Under the presidency of Vinton Thompson, the College succeeded in purchasing real estate for permanent sites in Lower Manhattan and in the South Bronx.

Students now come from all over the U.S. and the world, drawn to MCNY by its unique experiential focus, hands-on faculty, and opportunities for intense, accelerated study. Today MCNY includes undergraduate and graduate programs in human services, business, and education. Together the programs graduate hundreds of students a year, many of whom are the first in their families to graduate from college. Among the College's several recent achievements are the accreditation of its Masters in Education Program by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), accreditation of its business programs by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), and recognition for the College's contributions to "community service" by President Obama's Higher Education Honor Roll.

Before her death Ms. Cohen had intended to write a book about her educational aims that would be entitled *To Build a Better World*. Although she did not live long enough to complete that book, the aim of empowering oneself in order to purposely improve the world through constructive action remains an ongoing curricular goal at the college that she founded.

<sup>1</sup>Metropolitan College of New York, "Guidelines for Constructive Actions," v.5.2, 9/19/12.



## About the author

Grace G. Roosevelt is a member of the Board of Trustees of Metropolitan College. Before her retirement in 2016 she was an Associate Professor of Education at the College for over 20 years. She is the author of the acclaimed book *Reading Rousseau in the Nuclear Age* and, more recently, of *Creating a College That Works: Audrey Cohen and Metropolitan College of New York*.

# REMEMBERING MY MOTHER, **AUDREY COHEN**

Wendy Cohen

**M**y mother, Audrey Cohen, founded the College for Human Services, now known as Metropolitan College of New York (MCNY) in 1964 when I was 6 years old. She didn't start out to found a college. She wanted to help poor women get jobs. But when it became clear to her that people needed relevant, purposeful education that was more than just job training, she created the institution that is now MCNY. As Audrey's daughter, I grew up with her values and her sense of purpose, but I also knew her as a mother, a woman and a friend. I want to share a few stories and thoughts that illustrate ways in which a purpose-centered life goes beyond education.

During her high school years, Audrey Cohen was a cheerleader. For those who knew her energy and enthusiasm for what she believed in, that might not surprise you, but being raised by a feminist to be a feminist, I never would have dreamed of her being a cheerleader. Yet, cheerleading turned out to be a big part of the woman she grew into. She always looked for the good in people and in herself, and passionately advocated for change in order to make great things happen.

My mother was not afraid to defy conventional wisdom on the road to achieving her purpose. In fact, I don't think she was afraid of anything. On one of the nights she was out trying to get people interested in her idea to start a college, she found herself face-to-face with a would-be mugger. In that split second she knew she had to stand up for herself. Though she was barely 5' 1" and 100lbs, and had no martial arts training whatsoever, she took the stance of a karate expert and yelled "HI-YA!!," which sent the mugger running off.

Recently, I watched a 1989 interview of my mother and the presidents of Brown and Columbia Universities on the MacNeil Lehrer News Hour. Robin MacNeil was questioning her about a recent study showing that college students didn't know some basic facts about American history and asked her if she thought a student would be considered a failure if he or she didn't know some of these basic facts. My mother replied, "no," but she would consider that education a failure if it did not teach students how to take whatever they learned and use it to improve themselves and make the world a better place. She went on to challenge the other presidents in her very charming way, asking them if they could make the same claim. Helping students to improve themselves and make the world a better place is what the College for Human Services was about in the beginning and what MCNY is about today.

As a young girl, I often think about all the nights I watched her practicing a speech, preparing to go forth and share what she believed in. Audrey Cohen founded the College for Human Services because she was driven by her vision of a better world. She was committed to the interconnected ideals of social justice, educational excellence, and economic opportunity. Her participation in the Civil Rights and Women's Movements in the 1950s and 1960s led to her desire to support employment and educational opportunities for economically disadvantaged individuals, particularly women. Audrey Cohen helped to found the paraprofessional movement. She believed that paraprofessional positions would also be a first step for these women in their move up to full professional roles. Most of these types of positions are common today — educational assistant, recreational and occupational therapy assistant, senior citizen aide, mental health workers, etc. — but in 1964 when the Women's Talent Corps was created, securing a role for human service paraprofessionals was a totally new idea. My mother was convinced that the education and training needed to support these new positions had to combine theory with its application in professional settings within

human service organizations. In order to achieve this objective, Audrey first had to obtain funding for this initiative. Then she had to convince social service agencies to provide the critically important internships and job placements for students. She and a small group of other pioneers forged the first partnership with the New York City Department of Employment. A group of dedicated women worked with her to design the educational component of the program, while she negotiated with key social service agencies in the city to provide internship sites. These internships would enable the participating women to demonstrate in the field what they had learned in the classroom. She was tenacious and it took time, but in January 1966, the components were in place and the program began with 39 women.

The program grew; men were admitted a few years later. However, without an official educational credential, it was difficult to move toward full professional status. No existing college was willing to offer the type of education she knew was needed, so Audrey turned her training program into a college. In 1964, The College for Human Services was born, became Audrey Cohen College, and in 2000, Metropolitan College of New York. My mother was the President from the time of its founding until her death in 1996. The College was rooted in Audrey's conviction that education must empower individuals to take charge of their own lives and to make positive change in organizations and communities. That focus has not changed as the College has evolved to meet changing needs.

Audrey and her colleagues created Purpose Centered Education, which develops leaders by giving students the tools and experience they need in order to be effective at achieving change in the real world. The College doesn't single out women, but approximately 70% of its students are women. Students are challenged to think, to put initiatives into action, to assess their work, and to always look for the knowledge

needed to take effective action. This kind of education is empowering for everyone. Every semester, every student performs a Constructive Action in his or her workplace using skills and knowledge acquired in the classroom. The contributions that MCNY students and graduates have made clearly demonstrate the College's impact as an institution that fosters personal and professional development, promotes social justice, and encourages positive change in workplaces and communities. Graduates have been particularly active in the public and non-profit sector in fields such as mental health, developmental disabilities, teaching, daycare, substance abuse, criminal justice, business, and disaster management.

Life is too short; my mother died way too young in 1996 at the age of 64. She always taught me and my older sister, Dawn Margolin, to live with a sense of purpose. Her fighting spirit continued even after she was diagnosed with cancer. She still had this incredible energy. She even went rollerblading after one of her chemo treatments. And she kept working until the day she died. I spent a lot of time with her during the four years of her illness – in some ways they were the best of times - and often I would bring my children, Alex and Sarah, with me to visit her. My mother and I would spend time watching the kids play, talking about work and life.



**Wendy & Audrey  
Cohen**

My mother modeled the importance of having a positive and kind dialogue with yourself, learn by doing and make the world a better place. Recently my daughter Sarah picked up one of my mother's many old books, and out fell a poem she had written in 1976.

## **IDEA**

**so fuzzy, shapeless,  
slightly etched,  
shimmering to firmness  
awakening the mind and  
the whole being  
crying crisply to be  
born as a doing.**

"Crying crisply to be born as a doing," pretty much sums up Audrey's action-oriented life. She was always seeking to expand her mind and her learning, but more importantly, she was always looking to put that learning to work, through doing.

If I were to encapsulate my mother's career in six words they would be: Empowerment, purpose, vision, tenacity, service, and action. My mother said: "The real test of learning is not in what we know, but in what we accomplish with what we know." She

would tell everyone to get a relevant education and use it to **take action**. Look for problems you want to help solve, then go to the people you want to help and ask them questions. My mother believed that people are the experts on their own situations and had to be respected partners in the improvement process, so ask questions of the people you want to help. If the current solutions don't solve your issues, look for new solutions. Do your own Constructive Action.



## About the author

Wendy Cohen graduated from law school and after practicing law for a few years transitioned into wealth planning marketing over 25 years ago. She now works for Morgan Stanley as an Executive Director where she helps financial advisors create deeper relationships with their clients based on their interest in philanthropy, financial literacy and wealth planning. She and her husband, Robert, have two children, Alex Cohen-Smith and Sarah Cohen-Smith. She is a long-time member of the MCNY Board of Trustees and is currently its Vice Chair. As the daughter of the founder, she feels called upon to share Audrey Cohen's story and the story of Metropolitan College of New York. She is humbled to be a part of what her mother started almost 56 years ago.



**One Faculty  
Member's  
View of MCNY**

Humphrey Crookendale

I am the longest serving current member of the MCNY faculty having taught here for 36 years. In addition to teaching, I also presently serve as the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

I was fifteen years old when I immigrated with my family from Barbados to Brooklyn in 1971. My mother was a seamstress and my father a tailor. I had three older brothers. The reason for our move was that my parents wanted to make sure they could afford to pay for my older brother's education. They were hoping he would become a doctor and he did eventually go to medical school and became a prominent plastic surgeon. I graduated from Erasmus High School in 1974 and was admitted to Queens College where I studied with the likes of Andrew Hacker and Michael Harrington. How is this possible? Me a poor emigrant boy from Barbados. Only in the United States! I graduated from Queens College in 1978 and immediately entered the Howard University School of Law from which I graduated in 1981. I then returned to New York City and started looking for work as a lawyer.

After almost a year of job hunting with no success, I was desperate for some kind of employment so I responded to a tiny ad in the New York Times for a faculty position at the College for Human Services. They wanted someone with a background in Political Science and Law and I seemed to fit the bill. I sent in my application and resume and was invited to the College for an interview. At that time the College had only an undergraduate program in Human Services. No graduate schools or other programs had been created yet. At my group interview there were six or seven other candidates. At the age of twenty-nine, I was clearly the youngest in the group. I remember they asked all of us to speak about an author/theorist who had influenced our thinking and our lives. After some hesitation and not really knowing what to say, I talked about the fact that I had

been inspired by the debates in the Federalist Papers between the Madisonian Wing and the Jeffersonian Wing and their discussion of the role and responsibility of government in the lives of citizens.

At that time I knew nothing about the College's educational model or Purpose Centered Education, but I was very impressed with Audrey Cohen and her activism. Here was this woman rubbing shoulders with the movers and shakers in New York City and trying to create a new kind of college. I found it quite extraordinary. A few weeks after the group interview, I was called to the College for a meeting with Audrey, herself. She asked me if I was prepared to embrace something completely different from what I had experienced in my education to date. Audrey's question to me is still an important question for our new faculty members. It gets to the question of whether or not they truly buy-in to the College's model of transdisciplinary, performance-based education. Do they embrace the College's revolutionary model or are they stuck inside the confines of their specific discipline? In addition to asking me if I was willing to embrace a new model of education, Audrey asked me about myself and my thinking. She wanted to know what I, as an African American, thought about all the tumult in our society. Are you committed to the idea that our society needs dynamic and dramatic change or are you just a "go along to get along" kind of person?

To make a long story short I was offered the job and came to work at the College in 1984. I was immediately named to a team of four, two of whom had Ph.D.'s. My job was to teach the Systems Dimension and the Purpose Dimension where I taught my cohort of students the Constructive Action and observed them in the field. My academic team would meet every Friday sometimes alone and sometimes with the other three teams then teaching at the College. This planning together was really exciting. Each faculty member talked about what we were teaching, what we were planning to teach, what we could improve about

what and how we were teaching. And we received and gave pushback to the others. Another thing that I liked was that in those days Audrey did not accept that you talked with the field supervisors of your students on the phone. That was unacceptable. You had to go out into the field and meet in person with the supervisor about each student and, if possible, observe the student working with clients. To this day I still talk about the tri-partite nature of the College's education system, the field, the classroom, and the student. The nexus of these three things was, and is, crucially important to MCNY's unique educational system.

From the very beginning I loved working with students. I relished the give and take in the classroom. And I liked that the students looked like me and that they looked up to me. But it did not come easily. When I first entered the classroom I was a baby. Most of my students were older than I was. Very early on, within the first week or two of classes, I told my students not to try and bamboozle me because of my youth. At the end of the first semester, my class presented me with a framed picture of a newspaper with the headline, Crookendale bamboozles Crystal I students with la-di-da theory. This in reality was an affirmation and a term of endearment.

After a year teaching at the College, I thought of my job as a mixed bag. I was happy in the classroom, but I was uncertain because I was still being beaten up by the other faculty members who treated me as the junior member. To be honest I was still thinking about the College as a stop gap measure before I found a job as a lawyer. Then one day Audrey called me and two other faculty members into her office and asked us to join a think tank with some of her senior staff who were planning a graduate program for the College. For the first time, I was being asked to translate my knowledge and experience into action. To be asked to participate in the development of the College's first graduate program afforded me the opportunity to apply theory to a tangible purpose — a Master's Degree in Public Administration.

Being a faculty member at the College is not like being a faculty member in a traditional college. First of all many students come to us with a host of personal challenges and weak academic skills. In order to empower them, MCNY faculty must not only be experts in their fields, but must be counselors, social workers, and tutors as well as teachers. Faculty members cannot just theorize about social justice; they must practice it with their students in the classroom. This willingness to connect with our students on a personal basis and to deal with them as full human beings makes our faculty unique. In addition, the College does not offer tenure. We place our highest emphasis on teaching and upon ensuring student success. This is a profound difference between teaching here and in more traditional schools.

This quality of being more than such a scholar is something that we look for in our hiring of new teachers. We look for more than just someone who has high academic qualifications. We want our new faculty members to demonstrate to us and to our students that they truly buy into Purpose Centered Education. Their willingness to connect with our students and empathize with them is crucially important. We expect our faculty to be role models of the kind of human service workers we want our students to become. We don't leave it to students to make meaning for themselves about the theories we teach. We work to help them use the theories they are learning in the classroom to empower themselves, their workplaces and their communities. I don't believe students receive that kind of education in most traditional colleges.

The greatest joy I receive from being a faculty member at MCNY is the knowledge that my students graduate into positions of power and stature throughout New York City. This gives me a joy I don't think faculty members at many other colleges experience. The real joy of teaching here is seeing students who started out not knowing they would ever make it now in these positions of influence. Money cannot buy that feeling. I came here

as a kid and the faculty leaders with whom I interacted became true role models for me in the way in which they committed themselves to teaching. They challenged me to a better teacher and set a standard of commitment and of challenging students to excellence, but not at the expense of making them feel inadequate. This is what we at MCNY are like as faculty. We demand academic excellence and wouldn't let students settle for less, but we are with them every step of the way and never abandon them.

Faculty at MCNY strive to help our students endure, to persevere, to overcome the challenges they meet along their journey to achieving a degree. We understand that it can often be a difficult journey and we as faculty are here to help them reach their destination. We assist them to get on the path and stay on the path that leads to victory. Weeping and sorrow may last for a night but joy cometh in the morning.

## About the author

Humphrey A. Crookendale, Vice President for Academic Affairs, is the longest-serving member of the MCNY community. He came to the College in 1983, and since that time has served in leadership positions in all three schools—as Associate Dean and Acting Dean of the School for Human Services; as Dean of the School for Business; and most recently as Dean of the School for Public Affairs.

# Who We Are:

the MCNY Community



## Board of Trustees

---

**Charles Armstrong - Chair**

*Chief Executive Officer*  
Armstrong Interactive, Inc.

**Wendy Cohen - Vice Chair**

*Executive Director, Head of Loyalty & Millennial Marketing*  
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management

**Andrew Davidson - Treasurer**

*President*  
Andrew Davidson & Co.

**Frances Walton - Secretary**

*Investment and Operations*  
Plum Alley Investments

**Joanne Passaro, PhD**

*President*  
Metropolitan College of New York

**Al Cafaro**

*Co-CEO,*  
Metropolitan Talent, Inc.

**Greg Conklin**

*Vice President of Corporate Programming*  
Gray Television Group, Inc.

**Warachal Eileen Faison, MD, CMD**

*Senior Medical Director, Neuroscience & Pain*  
Pfizer Inc.

**Louise H. Feroe, PhD**

*Retired*

**Charles Gray, DSW**

*Faculty Trustee Associate Professor*  
Metropolitan College of New York

**Gary P. Jenkins, MPA '06**

*Administrator of the Human Resources Administration*  
The City of New York

**Paul P. Martin, JD**

Law Office of Paul P. Martin

**Matthew D. Metzger**

*Vice President, Infrastructure & Public Finance*  
Siebert Williams Shank & Co.

**Jonathan Reiss**

*Managing Principal*  
Analytical Synthesis

**Constance T. Robinson-Turner, MSA '00**

*Program Administrator, Mobile Dental Care Programs*  
New York University, College of Dentistry

**John S. Rodgers – Chair Emeritus**

*Retired*

**Grace G. Roosevelt, PhD**

*Professor Emerita of History and Education*  
Metropolitan College of New York

**Melanie Schnoll Begun, JD**

*Managing Director, Head of Philanthropy Management*  
Morgan Stanley

**Ninfa Segarra, JD**

*Senior Vice President, Government and Community Affairs*  
*Chief Diversity Officer*  
SBH Health System

**Thomas L. Webber, PhD**

*Writer/Consultant*

**Silvia Yoka Zerr, MBA**

*Director, Financial Services, Risk and Regulatory*  
*Advisory Practice*  
PwC

## Administrative Leadership

---

**Joanne Passaro**

*President and CEO*

**Michelle Blankenship**

*Chief Financial Officer*

**Isabel Cabrera**

*Executive Assistant to the President*

**Humphrey A. Crookendale**

*Vice President for Academic Affairs*

**Amy Greenstein**

*Vice President for Enrollment Management  
and Student Affairs*

**Judith Santiago**

*Director of Human Resources*

**Adrian Smith**

*Chief Information Officer*

**David F.A. Walker**

*Interim Chief Development Officer*

**Anthony Williams**

*Director of Institutional Research and Assessment*

**Kate Adler**

*Director of Library Services*

**Joanna R. Boston**

*Associate Director of Student Records and Registration*

**John Edwards**

*Executive Director for the Bronx Campus and College-Wide  
Career Development*

**Tina Georgiou**

*Director of Communications and Alumni Relations*

**Clotilde Ibarra**

*Dean of Students*

**Taurean Kennedy**

*Bursar*

**Rae Mack**

*Director of the Welfare to Careers Program*

**Michael Molina**

*Director of Student Services*

**Nathan Schiller**

*Director of Academic Support*

**Lakhbir Singh**

*Director of Financial Aid and Scholarship Programs*

**Shawana Singletary**

*Director of Admissions and Recruitment*

## Academic and Faculty Leadership

---

### **Humphrey A. Crookendale, JD**

*Vice President for Academic Affairs*

### **Joanne Ardovini, PhD**

*Dean, Audrey Cohen School for Human Services and Education and Public Affairs and Administration*

### **Chuck Frank, MPA**

*Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Co-Director, Emergency and Disaster Management Programs*

### **David Hahn, MM**

*Associate Dean for Academic Affairs*

### **Audrey Cohen School for Human Services and Education**

#### **Joanne Ardovini, PhD**

*Professor of Sociology*

#### **Eric Fuchs, PhD**

*Associate Professor of Urban Education*

#### **Patrick Ianniello, PhD**

*Associate Professor of Educational Technology, Director of the Master of Science in Education Program*

#### **Charles Gray, DSW**

*Associate Professor of Social Welfare*

#### **Heide Hlawaty, EdD**

*Associate Professor of Instructional Leadership*

#### **Ruth Lugo, PhD**

*Professor of Hispanic Languages and Literature*

#### **Frances Meyer, EdD**

*Assistant Professor of Special Education*

#### **Vanda Wark, EdD**

*Professor of School Psychology*

#### **Adele Weiner, PhD**

*Professor of Social Work*

### **School for Business**

#### **Solomon Appel, MBA**

*Associate Professor of Accounting*

#### **Lessie Branch, PhD**

*Associate Professor of Public and Urban Policy*

#### **Radhika Jha, MA**

*Assistant Professor of Economics, Director of Undergraduate Business Programs*

#### **Ralph Leal, MS**

*Professor of Economics*

#### **David Rosner, PhD**

*Associate Professor of Philosophy*

#### **Doru Tsaganea, PhD**

*Professor of Mathematics*

#### **Rachel Yager, PhD**

*Professor of Computer Science, Director of Graduate Business Programs*

### **School for Public Affairs and Administration**

#### **Humphrey Crookendale, JD**

*Professor of Criminal Law and Social Jurisprudence*

#### **Sophie Lee, PhD**

*Assistant Professor of Political Science*

#### **Phillip Nufrio, PhD**

*Professor of Public Administration*

#### **Louis Tietje, PhD**

*Professor of Theology, Director of the Masters in Public Administration Program*

#### **Pamela Ransom, PhD**

*Associate Professor of Urban Planning*

## Acknowledgements

---

This book has been a labor of love—love of the College, our mission, and our students and alumni.

I would like to begin by thanking my colleague and MCNY trustee, Dr. Thomas Lane Webber, for embracing this project idea and leading the way as a small team worked to make it a reality.

I would also like to thank the Book Project Team—Mary Martel, Tina Georgiou, and Victoria Hornstein—for their many contributions: interviewing alumni, sourcing photos, writing profiles and handling the myriad details of this project.

The essays by Wendy Cohen, Jinx Roosevelt and Humphrey Crookendale add important context about the College, its history, and the faculty and staff who have worked to realize its vision and mission over more than 50 years. Charles Armstrong’s introduction emphasizes the importance of our social justice mission, today and in the future.

Susan Farkas and her students added a powerful dimension to the profiles in this book through their videography. The video profiles were produced by Shahar Golan and Karina Meier; additional videotaping was done by Hiram Duran and Eunice Adekoya. The video team also took some of the alumni photographs, as did Joseph Asbery and Sunay Tamashev.

MaryLee Montalvo agreed to copy edit on a tight schedule; I am grateful to her for her careful and thoughtful work.

Finally, Dustin Slane’s graphic design talent captures the spirit and dynamism of the MCNY community. We are grateful to him for producing and publishing this beautiful book that demonstrates the purpose, the joy, and the journey of our students and alumni as they work towards better futures for themselves, their families, and our communities.

Joanne Passaro  
*President*

# M

etropolitan College of New York (MCNY) is a non-profit college that was founded in 1964 by Audrey Cohen and a group of social activists who believed that traditional higher education was fundamentally ill-equipped to serve adult students and the urban poor. For over fifty years, MCNY's goal has been to create new career opportunities for adults through a powerful model of integrated, workplace-embedded education known as Purpose-Centered Education.

MCNY was borne out of the social upheavals of the 1960s; its mission to promote social justice has arguably never been more important than it is today. This book illustrates the impact of the College through the contributions of its graduates, who work to promote constructive change throughout our communities.



[mcny.edu](http://mcny.edu)