

*Inspired to Succeed:  
Women Who Influenced Our Lives*

*New York State  
Legislative Women's Caucus*

1983

25

Years Strong

2008

Advocating on behalf of  
the women and children  
of New York State

*2010 National Women's History Month Celebration*





# Legislative Women's Caucus New York State

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Hon. Catharine M. Young



March, 2010



Dear Friends:

*I'm delighted to share the enclosed information which is from our exhibit "Inspired To Succeed: Women Who Influenced Our Lives."*

*As part of our annual celebration of International Women's Day and National Women's History Month, Caucus members were asked to share the most inspirational woman in their life. Not everyone chose to participate, either because of time constraints or because it was simply too difficult to select only one person.*

*Although most would agree that their lives have been touched by many people, there are some who made a lasting impact. Watching their lives, ours were changed. And as we studied their challenges and triumphs, our eyes were opened to the possibilities of who we could become.*

*As you enjoy the pictures and vignettes in the pages that follow and on the enclosed DVD, join us as we pay tribute to some of the amazing women by whom we've been "Inspired to Succeed."*

Sincerely,

Assemblywoman Michele R. Titus  
Chair

2010 National Women's History Month Celebration

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*Inspired to Succeed:  
Women Who Influenced Our Lives*

*World shakers, history makers, mothers, mentors, colleagues, friends. These are the women by whom we've been inspired. Their wisdom and guidance, whether personally experienced or gleaned through the pages of history, sharpened our focus and directed our paths. They've nurtured and shaped us to become the women we are today.*

*This year, as we celebrate International Women's Day and National Women's History Month, we offer this tribute to acknowledge those who have "Inspired us to Succeed".*



### ***Assemblywoman Jane L. Corwin***

*The woman who inspired me the most in my life is my mother, Jean Lewis. The daughter of poor German immigrants, she lived a difficult life in Tonawanda, New York. She graduated from high school in 1944 and, like so many others of that time, went to work in a ball bearing factory in order to support the war effort. In 1958, she married my father, and by 1964 they had their family.*

*What made my mother so inspirational to me was not some remarkable accomplishment or rare talent she possessed. She was not a leader of people nor did she command celebrity.*

*What made her so special was her ability to care for her family with little else but her own determination and will.*

*My father, having started a business when I was four years old, spent countless hours away from home. To make ends meet, he worked extra hours as an Air Force Reserve pilot. With little money or outside help, my mother was left to raise four children. She made sure that we ate properly, did our homework consistently, and went to church regularly. She cleaned her house, cooked the meals, volunteered at school and church, and paid the bills. To help make our business successful, she also managed the books, processed paperwork, and met with suppliers. Many times she was left to manage the house with little or no income at all. There were even times when her home was at risk of being taken. Each time she dug a little deeper and found it in herself to carry on.*

*By the end of her life one could say she had material success. Yet through it all, if someone asked, she would say that her children were her greatest accomplishment.*

*I learned the most important lessons of life from my mother. She taught me the importance of treating people well. She taught me to always work to the best of my ability, and she taught me that, with sheer determination and will, anything is possible.*



***Jean Lewis***



## *Assemblywoman Janet L. Duprey*

*Without a doubt, the most inspirational woman in my life is my mother, Edna Calkins Lacy.*

*Born in 1911 to a farm family, she became the 'woman of the house' at the age of 10 when her mother became ill. Mom graduated from Peru High School as valedictorian, and enrolled at Canton State College. She received a degree as a Nutritionist, moved to Ohio, and then to New York City.*

*In 1934, she married Peter J. Lacy. The marriage was not accepted by either the Calkins Methodists or the Lacy Irish Catholics, but lasted just weeks short of 60 years at the time of my Dad's death.*

*When I decided to enter the political arena in 1975, Mom was aghast. Her immediate comment was "They're all crooks. It's no job for a nice young mother." Of course, over the years, she and Dad were my proudest fans.*

*In 1994, Dad was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer caused by asbestosis. With the assistance of Hospice, Mom provided loving care to him. Her strength, compassion, and love were displayed daily in spite of her personal agony.*

*In the fall of 1998, Mom suffered the first in a series of strokes that resulted in her going from using a cane, to a walker, to a wheelchair in less than a month. She seldom complained about her loss of mobility, but the loss of her speech was most difficult. However, her sense of humor, her belief in God, and her love for family were never more apparent than during those difficult months.*

*In July 1999, a stroke took away the remainder of her speech and mobility. Her mind was still sharp, and she wrote her thoughts and emotions in beautiful notes. She made the decision to remove the feeding tube and die with dignity.*

*One of my favorite memories will always be the day she asked me if I would do a eulogy at her funeral highlighting her love for her family. I was surprised and answered that I wasn't planning a eulogy as she had forbidden me to speak at my Dad's funeral. With a twinkle in her eye and as big a smile as her face could form, she said and wrote "But I don't have to listen to this one." The next morning, she died with my daughter and me holding her hands—the circle of life complete.*

*Yes, my mother is my inspiration. She guided my childhood with a strong conviction of right and wrong, an unwavering support of my choices and a love that perhaps only mothers can understand. Above all, she provided an amazing standard for life and death with dignity. Throughout my Dad's illness and her own, she showed my family and me the true meaning of inspiration, dignity, courage, and absolute love.*



*Edna Calkins Lacy*

**Senator  
Velmanette  
Montgomery**



*I am inspired by her inner strength and dedication to children and young adults. She is a tremendous role model for other women; always sensitive and supportive of their personal and professional challenges.*



**Rev. Emma Jordan-Simpson**

**Senator  
Betty Little**



*"It's my great pleasure to nominate my daughter, Elizabeth Hogan, as the most inspirational woman in my life.*

*"Elizabeth is a wonderful daughter, loving wife, and an incredible mother of four beautiful children. She is creative, thoughtful, and community-oriented—generously lending her time and talent to many great causes. And she balances all of these responsibilities with a productive law career.*

*"She is joyful and makes those around her joyful. Her independence, strength, and determination have always been an inspiration to me."*



**Elizabeth Little Hogan & Josie**



## Assemblywoman Ellen C. Jaffee

Eleanor Roosevelt was a fascinating woman and inspired me at a very young age for many reasons. When I was in elementary school, my mother bought me a biography of Eleanor Roosevelt and suggested that I read it. I read it over and over again.

Eleanor was a woman who came from a background that was affluent, but her home life was very difficult. She went to a school for women and learned how to be assertive, strong, and to feel comfortable as a woman. She truly achieved beyond what one would have imagined when she was very young.

When she had the opportunity to become First Lady, she used her influence in the most amazing ways. In the media for instance, at that time there were no women journalists or reporters. She refused to have press conferences unless there were women journalists invited. That really inspired the media to hire women.

Her leadership in the world when she eventually became Ambassador to the United Nations was extraordinary. She was a woman of vision, passion, great intellect, and truly a role model for all of us as we got older and considered the possibility that we could have an impact in our communities as well.

### Poem for Ellen • January 7, 2007

She sat on her bed  
Barely thirteen  
The Good Earth open before her  
Pearl Buck's women  
Her women somehow  
Their tears  
Their sorrows  
Her first response  
At barely thirteen  
To the good and the sad on the earth. Later  
it was Whitman, Dickinson, and Frost  
Some of the Russians with long sounding  
names  
Hemingway, whose name ended in Y like  
the Russians  
And Ginsberg, Atwood, and Angelou  
Each opened another eye  
To the roads not taken  
Or the chances taken  
Or the freedoms taken Away.  
And then there was Eleanor  
Unruly Eleanor  
First Lady Eleanor  
First Person  
Singular in courage, ideals, humanity  
You must do the thing you think you  
cannot do  
She said  
You must do  
Do, Do,  
For the sake of the women  
For the sake of the children  
For the sake of the big sky of a world  
And the little girl listened  
And breathed in the words  
And held them inside her like gold.  
Oh, how she loved America  
Of, By, and For the people  
For the people  
For the people

For the people  
She sang  
She drank from the courage of Rosa Parks  
And drew from blind Helen's well  
And gathered the wisdom of those she called  
Father  
To dream along with them  
Great man Lincoln behind her  
Bobby and John at her sides  
Dream Man King before her  
And Franklin winking above.  
You must look back to go forward  
They whispered  
Look back to come home to the light.  
Take the best of the past, of our history  
And tie it into the light.  
She sits on her bed  
Her brave books open before her  
Learning, she listens  
Listening, she learns  
Weaving her purest response  
To the women  
And the children  
To the indigent  
And the lonely  
To the ones who remain in the dark  
To the air tinged with blackness  
And the sun so unguarded  
To the foul pollution of the heart.  
To the timely and timeless  
And the ultimate mystery  
Of the good and the sad on the earth.  
To the timeless and timely  
And the ultimate mystery  
Of the sad and the good on this earth.  
Barely thirteen  
She sat on her bed  
The good earth open before her...

©Judith Rose



**Eleanor Roosevelt**

This is a poem written for my swearing in ceremony when I was first elected to the Assembly by Judith Rose, a dear friend of mine. Judith read the poem and my son composed music and performed with her.



## **Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel**

*My political “rabbi” is Lee Seeman. She picked me out of the cabbage patch to run for North Hempstead Town Clerk 10 years ago. She asked me one Friday night during a Shabbat Service in my synagogue. Needless to say, I didn’t hear the sermon that night as I was so nervous just considering if I wanted to run for elected office.*

*In politics, everybody doesn’t like something, but nobody doesn’t like Lee. In the rough and tumble world of Nassau County politics, Lee has always been respected and admired by both sides of the aisle. Her kindness and sweet demeanor have set an example that you can be nice and still rise through the ranks of politics.*

*In 1995, Lee Seeman was appointed by President William Jefferson Clinton, and later reappointed by President George W. Bush, as a member of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad. In this role, she was instrumental in the establishment of one of the largest cemetery monuments in Poland, dedicated to those who perished in the Holocaust.*

*Lee has been a trustee of the W.F. Albright Institute for Archaeological Research in Jerusalem since 1988. In this position she has brought archeologists to the community to describe their work in the Middle East. Born in Israel, her ties there remain strong and she makes frequent visits there during the year.*

*Lee Seeman is currently serving her first term as a Councilwoman for the Town of North Hempstead. This is a culmination of close to 50 years in politics. After many years helping others achieve elected office, Lee took the leap to run for office herself. When others her age are slowing down, Lee is the hardest working councilwoman I know.*

*Prior to becoming a councilwoman, Lee has been an active member of the community. She has been the Program Director of the Great Neck Chamber of Commerce since 1975. She has promoted topics such as environmental conservation, health care, small business concerns, the economy of Long Island, and computer science. She has brought guest speakers from all over the world including the Consul General of Cyprus and the Ambassador of Belize.*

*In addition, Lee is a member of such community groups as the League of Women Voters, the World Jewish Congress, Hadassah, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She is also an active member of Temple Beth El of Great Neck just like me.*

*Lee is married to Murray Seeman, former Mayor of Great Neck Estates, and together they have four children and seven grandchildren.*



**Lee Seeman**

## ***Assemblywoman Amy Paulin & Alice Paulin***

*I would like to recognize my mother, Alice Paulin, as the most influential woman in my life. My mother was and is a role model because of her confidence in herself and in her children. When my three sisters and I were in elementary school, my mom simultaneously raised us and attained a Masters in teaching. She then taught 4th and 5th grade in Brooklyn for more than 20 years while becoming increasingly involved in our community, starting as Bulletin Editor for the PTA and working her way up to President for both the middle school and high school PTA organizations.*

*Watching her influence as both a teacher and community activist helped me understand what I wanted to accomplish in my life. To this day, my mother's confidence and desire to help is unwavering, even at the age of 83. My mother is the most influential woman in my life because her example showed me what I wanted to accomplish in my life, and her belief in herself and in me gave me the courage to chase my dreams.*



## ***Assemblywoman Earlene Hooper***

*There are so many women who have been inspirational to me and who made it possible for me to serve in the state legislature. Certainly my grandmother, my mother, and those women in my family before me.*

*But my hero for this project is Dr. Hazel N. Dukes, President of the New York Conference of the NAACP. It was she who was instrumental in assuring that I was elected to the New York State Assembly 21 years ago.*

*What I admire so much about Hazel is that when she comes into your life she doesn't just put you in a position and then leave you there to fend for yourself. She was there to support me emotionally, politically, socially, and financially. She was and continues to be a role model for women and men to achieve the maximum apex of their potential.*



***Dr. Hazel N. Dukes***



**Assemblywoman  
Donna A. Lupardo**

*I chose Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who in July of 1848 help convene the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. She helped write the Declaration of Sentiments proposing that women be granted the right to vote. It states: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal..." In 1920, eighteen years after her death, women were finally granted the right to vote. She was extremely influential in my life and in the lives of many women elected officials because of her commitment to the cause of women's suffrage and women's rights.*



**Elizabeth Cady Stanton**



**Assemblywoman  
Teresa R. Sayward**

*My father died when he was 37 years old, leaving my mother with five children, four daughters, and one son. Dad worked in the local paper mill and had no insurance.*

*Mom devoted her life to her children and never remarried. She scrubbed floors and took in laundry to feed and*

*clothe her children. She never asked for or accepted any type of assistance.*

*We were raised as devout Catholics, attending mass weekly and daily during Lent. We were loved and told we could aspire to be anything we wanted with hard work and determination. My mother taught us to treat people with respect and to share what we had with others.*

*I had the honor and privilege of taping my mother's oral history during the last year of her life. I was amazed to know that she was virtually penniless when dad died. I asked her, "Mom what did you have when dad died?" She replied, "I had everything I needed, I had you kids."*



**Beatrice Leona Riley**



### **Assemblywoman Annie G. Rabbitt**

*In celebrating Women's History Month, there is no doubt in my mind that Grace Roeder should be publicly acknowledged as the most influential and inspirational woman. Grace Roeder has been an active member of the Hampton-burgh Highlights 4-H club for numerous years where she dedicates her life to volunteering, serving as*

*a role-model for all ages while stimulating the community with her wisdom and kindness.*

*Apart from her communal involvement, Grace Roeder has a remarkable persona that has touched my heart. In meeting with Grace Roeder, I have come to realize that she is the type of person that wears her heart on the outside of her clothes. Each and every time I came into contact with Grace Roeder, either in a personal or professional setting, I could see her willingness to constantly help people. Those who have met Grace can attest to this aura about her and I*



### **Grace Roeder**

*consider myself lucky to have met with her on more than one occasion. Grace Roeder is not merely a devoted woman; she is an extraordinary woman that deserves recognition for all of her hard work and dedication. Grace Roeder continues to be the most inspirational woman to me primarily because of her immense commitment to children.*



### **Assemblywoman Vanessa L. Gibson**

*The most influential woman in my life is my mother, Phyllis Gibson. A humble and unassuming woman, she has always been there to encourage me even in the toughest of times and her steady support helped inspire me to make my initial run for the state Assembly.*

*I have learned a great deal from the example Phyllis Gibson has set throughout my life, and my values have been shaped by her gentle hands. I hope and pray that in my life, I'll have as much wisdom as she does.*



### **Phyllis Gibson**



### **Senator Suzi Oppenheimer**

*I am pleased to take this opportunity to recognize and publicly acknowledge Eleanor Roosevelt as the most inspirational/influential woman in my life. Eleanor Roosevelt distinguished herself as a pioneer for women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I am continually inspired by her commitment to issues affecting women and children. During the Great Depression, Eleanor Roosevelt fought for those overlooked by society and ensured their voices were heard as the New Deal was created to lift the nation out of economic dis-*

*tress. She was a fierce advocate for civil rights and human rights. An accomplished woman, Eleanor Roosevelt was the First Lady of the United States from 1933 to 1945, co-founder of Freedom House, an early and avid supporter of the United Nations who served as the U.S. Delegate to the U.N. from 1945 to 1952, and Chair of the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women for the Kennedy Administration. During her time at the U.N., she was instrumental in the drafting and subsequent approval of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Mrs. Roosevelt's tireless efforts on behalf of women, minorities, and the poor made her one of the beloved figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and certainly an icon of mine.*



**Eleanor Roosevelt**



**Assemblywoman  
Sandy R. Galef**

*There was something very special about Audrey Hochberg that she exhibited throughout her career in county and state government. Audrey exuded honesty, compassion, and dedication to the public she served, and was always a mentor to me as I followed in her path in political life.*

*She was a leader and a role model for women, serving as one of the first female members of the Westchester County Board of Legislators and its first female Minority Leader. During her legislative activities, she made such a difference in women's lives; whether it was establishing*



**Former  
Assemblywoman  
Audrey Hochberg**

*the neo-natal center at the Westchester Medical Center, protecting a woman's right to choice, dealing with sexual harassment cases, making the courts more accessible to women, advocating for day care funding, or standing up for consumers' rights.*

*Audrey garnered respect and admiration from everyone she met and worked with in White Plains and in Albany. Her thoughtful and in-depth approach to issues that matter in our lives have made a real impact on how many of us conduct our legislative business.*



**Senator  
Shirley L. Huntley**

*My grandmother, Dolly Moss Fitzgerald, was a dynamic woman. She had a lot of spunk, she knew how to get where she had to go. She was brilliant when it came to business. She and my grandfather were married when they were 15 and 16. They migrated from Chatham, Virginia to Southampton, Long Island, where they made their lives.*

*My grandmother said "they were going to be in big business." They purchased several businesses; two nightclubs, a laundry, a dry cleaners, a candy store, "Hershey's Hot", named after my mother, and a restaurant. They had a fabulous business and they also helped a lot of less fortunate people along the way.*



**Dolly Moss Fitzgerald**



**Senator  
Toby Ann Stavisky**

*Claire Shulman originally was trained as a nurse and served as a PTA President, but it was as a Community Board member that she began her career in public service. She served as Director of Community Boards and became Deputy Borough President in 1980. Six years later, Claire became the first woman Borough President of Queens and was re-elected three times until 2001 when term limits took effect. Currently, Mrs. Shulman heads the Willets Point Development Corporation, leading a revitalization effort of*



**Claire  
Shulman**

*major significance. When my husband passed away in 1999, Borough President Shulman was the first person to call and urge me to run for the Senate. I would not be in the Senate today without Claire. Her common sense and concern for others is well known. Claire's institutional knowledge about everything is exceeded only by her warmth, humor, and compassion. The landscape of New York City is filled with people whom Claire has helped and I am proud to be one of them.*

**Assemblywoman  
Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes**



*My mother, Clara M. Davis, is the single most important person in my entire life. She taught me how to love God, love myself, respect my ancestors, and treat people like I would like to be treated. Without her, I would not be where I am today.*



**Clara M. Davis**

**Assemblywoman  
Carmen E. Arroyo**

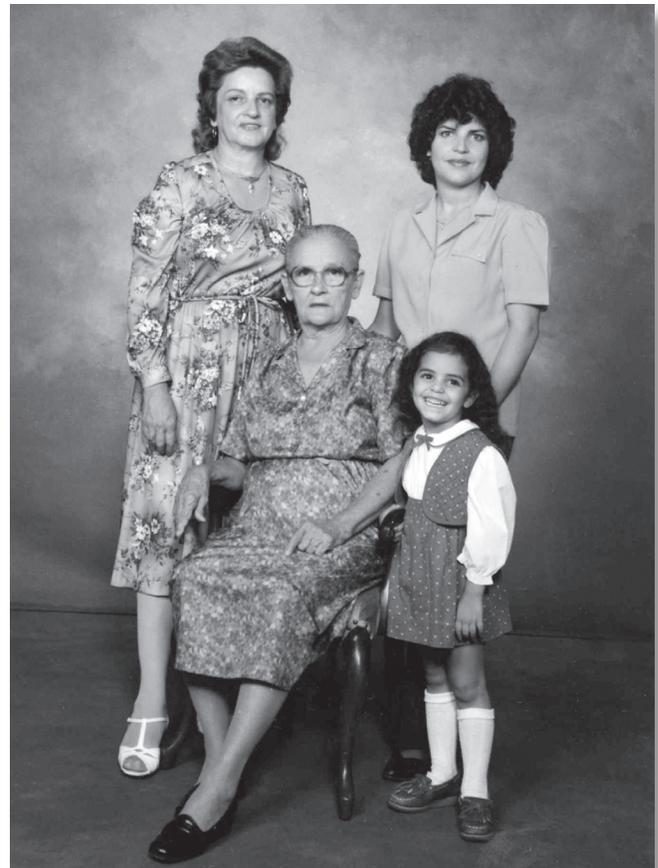


*The woman who inspired me the most in my life was my mother Maria "Panchita" Francisca. I was born during the decade of the 1930's and in my first years of life, I began to know this admirable woman. Young, beautiful, and talented, she was a self-sacrificing mother and a wife dedicated to her family.*

*It was a time, in which a woman only served to be a wife, to have children and to raise them. But, Panchita did more than just that. She worked hand to hand with my father in their business. She helped him manage it and she had her own business, she was a seamstress, and she had a workshop where she sold clothing materials and household goods.*

*Firm in her convictions, she helped the needy. Serving as a communitarian leader, always upholding the basic rights of women. She only had an elementary education, I always think with great regret that she did not have the opportunity to achieve a higher education.*

*What would have become of her, if she had a more advanced academic education? Panchita was a pillar of that society.*



**Maria "Panchita" Francisca (seated)  
with Maria del Carmen-Arroyo (right),  
and her daughter Omi Aguirre**



***Assemblywoman RoAnn M. Destito***

*“My mom has been a role model for me throughout my life. Over her 80-something years, she has pursued a degree in nursing, worked, and raised a family. She stressed to me the importance of giving back and public service. That is why I have decided to model my life after hers.”*



***Rose DeTraglia Maggiolino***



***Assemblywoman  
Joan L. Millman***

*I do not believe my predecessor, the late Eileen C. Dugan, ever saw herself as a teacher, a mentor, or a role model. But she was all of the above for me. As district leader, I worked closely with Eileen, or “I” as we called her, on all things important to the constituents of the 52nd Assembly District.*

*To this day, I often catch myself thinking how would Eileen handle this? Soon the answer becomes clear and that is exactly what I do. She both inspired me and influenced me in countless ways. She will always be remembered for her commitment to her district and for her bravery.*



***Former Assemblywoman  
Eileen C. Dugan***

# *New York State Legislative Women's Caucus*

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## ***Officers 2009-2011***

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*Honorable Donna A. Lupardo, First Vice-Chair*  
*Honorable Janet L. Duprey, Second Vice-Chair*  
*Honorable Vivian E. Cook, Secretary*  
*Honorable Suzi Oppenheimer, Treasurer*

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*Honorable Sandra R. Galef*  
*Honorable Barbara S. Lifton*  
*Honorable Annie G. Rabbitt*  
*Honorable Naomi Rivera*  
*Honorable Ruth Hassell-Thompson*  
*Honorable Catharine Young*

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# *New York State Legislative Women's Caucus*

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*Shirley C. Tranholm, Executive Director  
Elaine Patrice Brown, Assistant to Executive Director*



*The Legislative Women's Caucus is a bi-partisan, bi-cameral organization of women elected to the New York State Legislature. Founded in 1983, the Caucus works closely with women's organizations, state agencies, the Governor, and others to advocate for programs and services that benefit women, children, and families.*

*Through the Caucus, women legislators work to:*

- \* improve the participation of women in all areas of government,*
- \* support issues that affect and benefit women in New York State, and*
- \* provide a network of support for women in the State Legislature.*

*Today, 51 women serve in the Assembly and the Senate, representing urban, suburban, and rural districts across New York State.*

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