



NYWCC honors Women of Excellence on September 20th

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New York, NY “We’re here to make sure women get a piece of the pie,” said Quenia Abreu, president and CEO of the New York Women’s Chamber of Commerce (NYWCC), opening the organization’s 17th annual Women of Excellence awards held at Battery Gardens Restaurant on September 20th. Abreu said that women still receive only 4% of contract opportunities overall and women of color less than 1%. “We’re going to do better, we’re going to make it happen!” said Abreu.

The NYWCC’s ContractHER program, launched last year, is currently preparing 40 women to do business with the city and state.

“We’re helping to put women-owned businesses in front of agencies and prime contractors,” said Abreu, asking the audience for support and, most of all, to “Contract HER!”

Presenting awards were NYWCC chair Lina Gottesman, president of Altus Metal, Marble & Wood; NYWCC board member Vera Moore, president, Vera Moore Cosmetics; NYWCC board member Claire Scanlon, former VP and manager, BNY Mellon’s Supplier Development program; and 2018 NYWCC honoree, Elizabeth Velez, president of the Velez Organization.

Rodneyse Bichotte, NYS assembly member, chair M/WBEs Subcommittee, thanked Abreu for her role in passing a new MWBE bill and stressed the need for “job and wealth creation.”

Lorraine Grillo, president and CEO NYC School Construction Authority (SCA), commissioner Department of Design & Construction (DDC), said that “the NYCSCA has an amazing MWBE program thanks to my team.” Gottesman said that Grillo’s “support for women has been unwavering.”

Shendora Pridgen, executive director & global head of supplier diversity, Morgan Stanley, told all that “Diversity is fundamental to our role as a global leader.”

Francilia Wilkins Rahim, CEO & founder, R.F. Wilkins Consultants, Inc., whose firm is, noted Moore, playing a key role in “ensuring minority inclusion in the JFK project,” told attendees to “keep doing the good work to make sure this City is Contracting HER!”

Eugenia Foxworth, president and owner, Foxworth Realty and a NYWCC board member, thanked Abreu and all present who helped her business grow in Harlem, saying “I hope you all will support

women in business.”

Cira Angeles, president & CEO, LA Riverside Brokerage, Inc., said that the livery-based association she works with is helping her “be the voice for women in rooms filled with men.”

Sarah Man, managing director-investments, The Voyage Group of Wells Fargo Advisors, Inc., said “we are the authors of our life’s journey” and defined her role as helping “women protect their financial future.”

Gladys Lopez, global head, supplier diversity, BNY Mellon, pledged that her company “will work to further opportunities for women of color in the NY-NJ area.”

Kimberly Hardy, vice president of compliance, McKissack & McKissack, thanked Scanlon and Abreu, “a fierce advocate for women throughout the City and the country [who] works tirelessly to empower women...and all people to lead better lives.”

Renee Sacks, executive director, Women Builders Council; president & CEO, Sacks Communications; publisher, Diversity Agenda, encouraged all to “continue to build bridges for consensus.”

Zenaida Rodriguez, assistant director, Business Diversity Initiatives Unit, MTA Department of Diversity & Civil Rights, called “a force of nature” by Velez, asked all to “prepare yourself for the contracts coming down the pipeline.”

Adeola Adejobi, CEO & founder, Avant-Garde Network (AGN) which focuses on “the intersection between business and diversity,” welcomed the opportunity to “be part of this amazing class of women,” noted the obstacles all women and especially women of color face, and vowed that she “looks forward to collaborating with all.”

Gentleman of Quality, Mark Gjonaj, NYC council member and chair of the Small Business Committee, called small business “the backbone of our economy” and urged women-owned businesses to combine their purchasing power.

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