 

***Denise Jones, Lieutenant, NYCPD***

Native to Queens, NY, Officer Jones attended John Bowne High School followed by LaGuardia Community College and York College. She majored in Information Systems Management. After college she became an Assistant Computer Programmer for a private corporation. As a current Lieutenant in the NYCPD, she currently oversees the Probationary Monitoring Unit, which monitors all members of the service that are on probation and become disciplinary concerns.

***Lakia Echols, Founder of MakeMyMotherProud and Sergeant in the US Army Reserve***

Sergeant Echols grew up in Far Rockaway, NY and attended Beach Channel High School. She then attended St. Joseph’s College, majoring in Organizational Management, because of the location and the great military programs its offered. After college, she started working deeply in her organization *MakeMyMotherProud* helping at risk youth. Her current position is still serving in the US Army reserve for over 13 years, working with her organization and teaching/mentoring at St Johns University to at risk high schools. Her experience serving overeas prepared her for most of the involvement she is in now. Living in Kuwait for two years helped her learn how to community develop and work with children.

***Ade Ojo, Attorney, Law Office of Ade Ojo (Real Estate Law)***

Ade Ojo grew up in Lagos, Nigeria and attended college in London, United Kingdom where he played collegiate football (soccer) and majored in law. After college, he worked at the Citizen Advice Bureau and then with the Legal Aid at the Hackney Law Center in East London. His first position as a Lawyer was to fight for the elderly that were denied social security due to their status in the United Kingdom. After, he took a position with a criminal defense firm in North London. In 2001, he moved to the United States and was admitted to the NY Bar in 2002. Currently, he owns and operates a Law Office in Midtown Manhattan, representing mostly businesses and sometimes individuals in Real Estate Law.

***Robin Devonish Scott, CEO of RD Enterprises (Author/Motivational Speaker)***

Robin grew up in Long Island City Queens in Queensbridge Housing Development and went to MLK High School in Manhattan. She attended a small private college in Manhattan, Audrey Cohen College where she was able to earn a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in less than 4 years. While in college, she majored in Human Services. After college, she had various jobs including Foster Care Casework, Probation Officer, Government Grants Manger and now an Entrepreneur. She currently owns a home-based business, which assists new writers in publishing their books. Her experience in social services has prepared her to service those not only striving to do better but for those who strive to make a mark and change in the world.

***Shaun Tomblin, Agent of New York Life Insurance Company (Finance)***

A native Queens, NY, Shaun attended and graduated from Holy Cross High School. He graduated (with honors) with a degree in Business Management from the University of Maine, Fort Kent on a Basketball Scholaraship. He was inducted into the Athletic Hall Of Fame in September 2009. For a few years after college, he worked as an Analyst for Wachovia Securities. Currently, he shares information that allows families and businesses to plan for the unexpected. Shaun says, “Like Basketball, my business is about finding what works and duplicating that activity with the intent of being more and more efficient and frequent.” Working as analyst, he was prepared with regards to paying attention to details. and breaking down complex situations in to smaller manageable pieces.

### **Guest Panelists Biographies**

***Phyllip Jones, Math Teacher and Basketball Coach at HS for Global Citizenship (Education)***

Mr. Jones is a native to the Prospect Heights area of Brooklyn, NY. He attended A. Philip Randolph Campus H.S. in Harlem, N.Y. He went on to attend Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida, completing a 5-Year MBA Program in the School of Business & Administration. He was drawn to his large HBCU for many reasons: the weather, wanting to get out of NYC, receiving a full scholarship, and attending with his best friend (since 1st grade). After college, he traveled to various states and a few islands and interned and worked at Bad Boy Entertainment. As a current math teacher, he instructs students in various math topics. He serves as a role model, counselor, and advisor for his students.

***Peta-Gay Clarke, Senior Information Technology Analyst for the Federal Reserve Bank*** Since 2004, she has worked in various industries such as banking, retail, government and media as an information and web technology professional. Peta is also a community advocate for Girls in STEM. She currently co-leads the NY Chapter of Black Girls CODE (BGC). BGC is a non-profit organization that looks to increase the number of women of color in the digital space by empowering girls from underrepresented communities, to become innovators in STEM fields. Peta holds bachelor’s degree in Computer Programming and is currently a M.S. candidate at Pace University’s Seidenberg School of Computer Science and Information Systems. Peta resides in Queens, NY with her daughter, Rochelle.

***Allyson Gill, Communications Technology***

Allyson Gill is a Brooklyn native and a graduate of Brooklyn Technical High School. She is currently a student CUNY York College in Queens, majoring in Communications Technology with a focus in web development and minoring in Journalism. Allyson currently volunteers for Black Girls Code doing outreach and assists with events and workshops. She is a member of the National Society of Black Engineers and the President of her college’s National Association of Black Journalists chapter. To make money she is a staff reporter for her college’s newspaper getting paid per article and works part-time as an office assistant at Duggal Visual Solutions, a design, graphics and digital printing company. Her passion stems from a desire to be the black female representation that is lacking in the fields of media and technology.

***MB Rogers, Business Operations Manager of Cisco Systems, Inc. (Business)***

In her current position, MB is responsible for driving global sales operations requirements for Cisco’s Security portfolio. MB has over 18 years professional experience. Among many accomplishments, MB created the vision and strategy for development of Cisco’s first Education and Development Center (EDC) in RTP, North Carolina and her team was recently awarded the 2014 Corporate Partner Award from Inwood House of NYC. MB holds a BA in History from West Chester University. She attended Western Carolina University for Project Management. MB lives in Exton, PA with her two sons. She is a recent breast cancer survivor and uses time to drive education and awareness of technology and treatment innovations.

***Huey Ferguson, Manager of Business Development/Member Relations (Business)***

Mr. Ferguson is a native of the island of Jamaica. He attended St. John’s University in Queens, NY under a scholarship and played soccer.  He majored in marketing, which helped him get into the business of marketing sports teams and programs after college. In addition, he played professional soccer. Currently, he is the manager of Business Development / Member Relations at Municipal Credit Union. He creates new business for the credit union, manage daily staff activity and develop innovative programs and events to create exposure for the credit union. He feels being able to work on a team and engage various people and groups on a number of different levels has prepared him for this position.

### **Guest Panelists Biographies**

***Carolina Charles, Associate, Architecture, Transportation***

Ms. Charles was born in the Dominican Republic and migrated to Unites States at the age of 8. She grew up in Washington Heights and went to Brooklyn Tech where she was introduced to Architecture and Engineering for the first time and loved it immediately. After Tech she went to CCNY where she obtained her Bachelor degree in Architecture. During this time she worked at a supermarket and tutored Jr. HS students. Doing this and with the help of her parents she was able to pay for her entire tuition. After graduation her first job was at a small interior design firm where she did mostly AutoCAD drafting of cabinetry and custom furniture. From there she went to a small architecture studio where she was finally a junior architect. There she was exposed to a large range of tasks and worked very closely with the principal architect. From the studio I joined DMJM Harris at the time, which was a large-scale infrastructure company with specialty in transportation. DMJM then turned into AECOM and this is where she worked for the past 7 years. Some of the projects I have worked on are East Side Access, connecting LIRR with Grand Central Station, The 2nd Ave Subway line, some schools, and even a federal facility out of our Virginia office.

***Rob Underwood, Chief Technology Officer at Relay Graduate School of Education***

Mr. Underwood leads the development and execution of the institution's technology strategy. Before joining Relay GSE, Mr. Underwood served as National Senior Sector Specialist for the Media & Entertainment sector at Deloitte where he worked with the Deloitte Vice Chairperson to develop Deloitte's Media & Entertainment go-to-market strategy. Earlier in his time with Deloitte, Mr. Underwood led strategy-consulting engagements for global media and technology companies such as Sony, Sun, Dell, Avaya, Cisco, and Motorola. Prior to Deloitte, Mr. Underwood worked at BearingPoint/KPMG, Pandesic, and xWave/TechKnowledge. Mr. Underwood began his career teaching English in Nara, Japan as part of the JET Programme. Mr. Underwood earned his B.A. in Government from Colby College.

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***Melissa del Valle Ortiz, Community Activist***

A native to Brooklyn, she grew up between Bushwick, Clinton Hills/Fort Greene and Canarsie and attended Norman Thomas HS, focusing on Secretarial Studies. She decided to join the United States Army after High School for her personal growth. She was quite shy as student but later became an outspoken and vocal woman. In the army, she has been placed in Seoul Korea, Ft. Jackson, South Carolina, and Fort Lee, Virginia. She later left the military to become a stay at home mother and ultimately a Community Leader, as she learned the necessities of advocating for herself and her children. In her current position, she has participated in various boards including education, tenant rights, and women empowerment and anti violence.   Her passion however, is affordable housing for low-income families.  Her personal experience as a struggling single mother prepared her for this role, as she has had to either seek out programs or create them where there is a void.

### **Guest Panelists Biographies**



***Dr. Nia R. Medder, Family Nurse Practitioner /Associate Professor at Mount Sinai***

She spent her early years on the island of Jamaica and then came as a child to NY. She grew up in Harlem attended St. Jean Baptiste HS in the Upper East sSde of Manhattan. She earned a Bachelor’s in Biology from Long Island University, C.W. Post Campus. She also earned a Bachelor’s in Nursing at the College of Mount Saint Vincent. She went on to earn a Master’s and a Doctorate in Nursing from Pace University. She traveled very little in between degrees because she spent a lot of time studying. She was able to find a nursing job immediately and worked and paid my way through graduate school. When she finally finished and became a doctor she took a two and a half week trip traveling all Europe! She currently practices at Mount Sinai Medical Center in an outpatient clinic located nearby to the main hospital where she provides care for extremely complex medical patients. The beauty of her position is that she combines Nursing and Medicine to provide quality care. Practicing nursing before she became a doctor has prepared her to treat a wide variety of patients with quality care.



***Rubain J. Durancy, Esq, Lawyer and Educator***

Mr. Durancy is a trained lawyer, educator, and founder of TRIAD Consulting Strategies, a boutique-consulting firm that supports companies and individuals in planning and development. He grew up in this community, in Crown Heights and attended PS 91 and IS 391. He graduated from Brooklyn Technical HS. He earned his Bachelors degree from City College and law degree from Brooklyn Law School. He also earned other graduate degrees in public administration and in education leadership. He went to City College because he dropped out of Howard University at 16 and his parents expected him to return to school immediately. IHe also wanted to hang out in Harlem and loved the city so he picked CCNY. He is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and several other organizations that are committed to the empowerment of communities of color. He has been elected to public office and had the privilege of working on many political campaigns for the last 20 years. Everything he has been involved in has prepared him for his next major move. From teaching to starting a company and from volunteering as a mentor to fighting for Black and Brown students, every activity helps him become a stronger person, better man, and smarter leader. His current major work is that he is running for the NY State Senate in this community to help improve schools, communities, and people’s lives.

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