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INSIDE THE LEAGUE

From the Co-Presidents Improving Equity in NYC

At the Annual Meeting, the membership voted to accept "Equity" as our local program. We know this is a different approach to the traditional local program, but this entire year has been different. We all learned a hard lesson regarding inequity in health care, gender justice, education, criminal justice and even access to voting and information. This year challenged us, and we will now address these challenges through the work of our committees and our Board.

We need all of us to accomplish this goal and advance our mission. We continue to be a part of many coalitions whose work in these areas will bring back a vibrant NYC. Our members and volunteers will be called upon to increase our presence at voter registration and voter engagement events. Our committees are looking for participants to join with them in lobbying and advocacy for improved equity and access for all New Yorkers. Our Development Committee needs your help to cultivate donors and access grants to allow us to move forward in all these areas.

All of us, working together, can make the "new" New York a more equitable place where civic engagement improves, voter participation increases, and everyone's voice is heard. We challenge you to join with us in these efforts.



Illustration by Tayra Vonette

Diane Burrows
Diane Burrows

Lesley Sigall
Lesley Sigall

Our 2021 Annual Meeting

By Amy Matthews, LWWNYC Board Secretary

The League held its Annual Meeting on Thursday June 17, 2021, with record attendance. Over 50 members joined the Zoom meeting along with 29 voting by proxy. A slate of new board directors was approved. Continuing into a second board term are Patricia Manning, Dorothy Ouzidane, Laura Quigg, and Kai Rosenthal. We welcomed new Board Member Deborah Brodheim, and Suzanne Gabriel as new VP of Membership to fill out the term for Ashmi Sheth, who stepped down earlier this spring.



Featured Speaker
Louise Mirrer, CEO of the
NY Historical Society

Susie Gomes, VP of Development, presented a three-year fundraising plan and urged all members to get more actively involved in these efforts. The budget received an incredible boost this year, due to the successful gala in April which netted over \$95,000 after expenses.

Bylaws were updated to add two additional appointed board members. The cap on membership of our external Advisory Board was lifted in order to assist with long-term fundraising efforts. The Bylaws were also updated to emphasize the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in all that we do.

The local program this year focuses on *Creating Greater Equity for the People of New York City*. The membership also voted to organize a new committee to analyze the Boulder, CO League's study and position supporting legal permanent resident voting rights in local elections.

Our featured speaker Louise Mirrer, CEO of the NY Historical Society, discussed the **Lady Pink "Vote" Mural** and its importance to the NY Historical Society and the city at large. A video highlighting our *Students Inside Albany* offered a fresh view on why this program is so important.

Engage with Our League

Virtual SIA 2021

By Crystal Joseph, LWVNYC Vice President of Communications

Embracing the disruptions of the pandemic and the evolving nature of online gatherings, our State League welcomed students to its first virtual Students Inside Albany (SIA). Since most students were still in virtual learning mode, the platform for SIA was an interesting way to explore learning about New York State governance, public service, and policy-making from a distance.

The journey to a virtual SIA was a thoughtful planning process. One of our early goals was to ensure that students be able to understand the key objectives to influencing state policy and be comfortable asking and learning from their local State Senate or Assembly representatives. While all students asked great questions and inquired about the path to public office,

the highlight of the program was hearing SIA alum Jason Bohner share his in-person 2019 SIA experience with the 2021 cohort – a great model of leadership from a local student who is changing the sphere of advocacy and organizing, not just in NYC, but across the state and beyond.

The three students who represented our City League in the virtual program each shared a bit of their experiences in a video shown during our 2021 Annual Meeting. That video can be viewed on the LWVNYC YouTube channel [here](#).

Although the virtual space offers much possibility for working and learning, our students agree that nothing can replace the in-person, on-site experience of staying in and touring the Albany region. As such, we anticipate that with time and the proper safety precautions, SIA 2022 will be a phenomenal experience for a fantastic group of new students.

Hundreds Tuned In as LWVNYC Honored Local New Yorkers at April Gala

By Barb Ettington, LWVNYC Board Member

The LWVNYC celebrated an evening of hope and vision at **The New New York** fundraising gala this spring. “We are very grateful to the event’s 27 sponsors and 500 registered guests for supporting our mission,” said Diane Burrows and Lesley Sigall, Co-Presidents of the LWVNYC. The money raised will allow the LWVNYC to continue its work to inform, educate, and engage New Yorkers to participate in civic life and elections.

Maria Torres-Springer, Vice President of US Programs for the Ford Foundation, served as the event Honorary Chair, and Liz Cho, co-anchor of WABC-TV’s Eyewitness News First at 4pm and Eyewitness News at 6pm, was Emcee for the virtual event. Ms. Torres-Springer shared with the guests that “the League of Women Voters is dedicated to increasing voter participation

and narrowing participation gaps across communities in NYC.” Attorney General Letitia James, the featured speaker, stressed that New York is a city where “those at the decision-making table should look as diverse as the city itself.”

The three honorees were: Deborah Borda, President and CEO of the New York Philharmonic; Leecia Eve, Vice President of Public Policy at Verizon and member of the New York Forward Advisory Board; and Dr. Julia Iyasere, Executive Director of the Dalio Center for Health Justice at NewYork-Presbyterian; who each shared their perspectives and promise for a new New York City.

The virtual gala also featured musical performances by New York Philharmonic violist Katherine Greene, and Broadway stars Jenn Colella and Elizabeth Stanley, who embodied the strength and resiliency of NYC.

If you are interested in helping the LWVNYC continue its sponsor and donor outreach, please contact Susie Gomes, VP of Development, development@lwnyc.org.



Illustration by Tayra Vionette

Welcoming Lady Pink to the NY Historical Society

By Diane Burrows, LWN NYC Co-President

On Wednesday, June 16, the NY Historical Society and LWN NYC joined together in celebration to welcome the Lady Pink mural "VOTE" to the Historical Society. This magnificent mural, created for the League on National Voter Registration Day 2014 by the New York graffiti artist, Lady Pink, now belongs to the NY Historical Society. It will be an integral part of the education curriculum and will remain an iconic image for the League.

Louise Mirrer, President and CEO of the NY Historical Society, spoke at the League's Annual Meeting of the role this mural will play in the narrative of New York history at the museum. The mural depicts the symbols of the Voting Rights movement. It includes images of marchers and demonstrators, chained suffragists, the US Constitution, and the League of Women Voters of NYC all within the letters of the word "VOTE." You can view this fabulous mural for yourself on the fourth floor at the **NY Historical Society** located at 77th Street and Central Park West.



Lady Pink at the creation of the Vote Mural in 2014



Guests included LWN NYC Co-President Diane Burrows; past Presidents Cathy Gray and Ruth Altman; former Executive Director of LWN NYC Ashton Stewart, who recruited Lady Pink to create the mural in 2014; and LWN NYC Program Administrator Natalie Silverman. Other guests in attendance were Board Members Kai Rosenthal, Dorothy Ouzidane, Shelly Warwick, and Laura Quigg. Gabryel Smith and Gary Padmore from the NY Philharmonic also attended.

The League's UN Observers

By Suzanne Surbeck

The establishment of the United Nations in the 1940's was not assured. Many Americans were skeptical, but members of the League of Women Voters were not. They organized a grassroots campaign, wrote thousands of letters, and contacted their United States Senators urging them to approve the UN charter. The Charter was eventually ratified, and since 1946 the League's UN Observers Corps has represented the League's priorities and values while partnering with the United Nations to achieve many shared and important goals.

"The most important thing in the UN Observers job is that the League has a voice. We're not just observing, we're speaking," says Suzanne Stassevitch, the former President of the LWV of

New York who served as an Observer from 2013-2017. The League has special consultative status, she explains, granted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This allows the League's Chief Observer to speak and submit written statements, and to be recognized at official meetings.

Another crucial aspect of the League's UN Observers position is working with the many NGOs or non-government organizations. As a member of the NGO community, the League has been engaged in a variety of issues including violence against women in politics. The League was also instrumental in the creation of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1945 and remains involved in the Commission's work to this day. In fact, three members of the LWN NYC were selected to join the 2021 UN Observers Corps: Jane Colvin, Paulette Austin, and Sarah Hirsch.

Remembering Laura Altschuler

By Adrienne Kivelson

The New York City League lost another star in its galaxy with the death of past President Laura Altschuler on June 11, 2021. A member of the League for almost 50 years, Laura joined the Upper West Manhattan branch in 1974. Like so many of our members in those years, she began her career in community service and political activism in the parent associations of her children's schools. She then went on to serve for many years as the League's representative on the prestigious New York City Educational Priorities Panel.



As president from 1987 through 1991, Laura expanded the League's outreach to the city's business community and began our long relationship with

WABC-TV in presenting mayoral and other city office election debates. While her term as president ended in 1991, Laura's dedication and service to the League never diminished. She continued serving on our Board of Directors; chaired, co-chaired or participated in decades of annual fundraising events, and trained hundreds of League and community members on the finer points of moderating debates and community meetings.

L to R: Beverly Sills, Liz Smith, Laura Altschuler, and Barbara Walters at a League event in 1992

Laura was a true child of "The Heights." From 1939, when her family escaped Nazi Germany, until her dying day, Laura lived in her beloved Washington Heights. She loved everything about it – from the expansive gardens of Castle Village to the extraordinary sunsets from her view of the George Washington Bridge; from the bucolic expanse of Fort Tryon Park to the speed of the "A Train," which took her to the opera, ballet, theater, museums – and League meetings. She thought it was the best place to live.



Laura Altschuler with Dr. Sue Lederman at 1992 League event

The League and the lives of all who knew her benefited greatly from Laura's presence. We extend our condolences to her loving family: her children Ted (Michael Mitchell) and Susan; her grandchildren Stefanie, Daniel, Brandon, and Leslie; and her great-grandchildren Jeremy and Oliver.



NYS Independent Redistricting Commission Announces Website and First Round of Hearings

The Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) has announced hearings to be held virtually between July and August. These hearings are the best opportunity for residents to participate in the redistricting process. By submitting your community of interest to the IRC, and presenting it at your local hearing, New Yorkers have the chance to contribute to the redistricting process. Participants must register no later than 2:00pm the day prior to your community's hearing. [Click here to register to testify or submit testimony.](https://nyirc.gov/meetings)

All dates are available at the new Independent Redistricting (IRC) website <https://nyirc.gov/meetings>

Contact the Census and Redistricting Committee to learn more and to get involved. census@lwnyc.org

Remembering Nicky Heller

By Gladys Krasner, LWVNYC Past President

We mourn the death of past President Helen Heller, known to the League and to the world as “Nicky.” Simultaneously we celebrate Nicky’s life and legacy to the League of Women Voters of the City of New York.

Nicky’s presidency, 1971-1975, coincided with the emergence of Women’s Lib. The big question then was, “What would be the relevance of the League?” For Nicky, it was women running on “their own steam.” It meant joining the League under her own name, not “Mrs. Arnold Heller.” It also meant teaching women how to organize and learn how to move government. The League’s positions under Nicky, besides voter registration, included such things as family assistance legislation, equal employment opportunities, ecology, and liberal foreign policies.



L to R: Nicky Heller with Herman Badillo and Shirley Chisholm



After her presidency, Nicky used all her experience and the contacts she had made through the League to organize the Educational Priorities Panel. The EPP mobilized 25 education and civic organizations to ensure that budget monies would go to the classroom.

We also remember with pride Nicky’s leadership in fighting for the Equal Rights Amendment in New York State. Her advocacy and commitment led to her appointment to the Mayor’s Commission on the Status of Women.



Heller at the NY Bar Association with NYC Mayors John Lindsay and Abe Beame

Nicky touched every aspect of city life. Whoever was in contact with her was the better for it. There was always a smile and a thank you. Nicky was not a clock watcher. She often worked from 9am to 9pm, five days a week, checking in often with her husband Arnold and their three children: Zig, Joan, and Ann.

When Nicky left the presidency, she never left the League. After retiring as Executive Director of the NYC Council of Jewish Women, she was elected to the League’s Board of Directors and shared her quiet wisdom with us once again.

Our condolences to Nicky’s family and especially to her sister, League member Nancy Greenberg.



Illustration by Tanya Vionette

Meet Beatriz Guerrero



I am the Business Coordinator for the League of Women Voters of NYC. I am an accomplished business and events coordinator, and I enjoy using my skills and experience to contribute to the advances that happen every day at the League. I graduated from Saint Peter's University with a BA in

International Business. My hobbies include working on my personal skincare company and developing my brand. My main career goal is to create a space where I can be creative and provide a service where I can help the people in my community and then expand.

LWVNYC Welcomes Two New Board Members

Suzanne Gabriel – Vice President of Membership

Suzanne has been a member of the League since 2019, and has been an active volunteer at voter registration drives and on the Telephone Information Committee, answering voters' questions about a variety of issues. She is a retired health care communications executive with more than 25 years of experience in health-related marketing communications and account department and agency management. Suzanne has extensive experience developing marketing communications strategies and programs for a range of pharmaceutical and consumer health products, and for issues including smoking control, vaccines, and women's health.



Deborah Brodheim – Board Member

Deborah has been a volunteer with the League since 2020, supporting corporate and foundation fundraising efforts and GOTV initiatives. She has over 25 years of global experience as a Senior Relationship Executive in the financial services industry. Over the last 10 years she has served on non-profit boards and volunteered as a financial literacy tutor.



Deborah joined the non-profit sector full-time in 2017 as the regional director of development for the educational non-profit Playworks, supporting their mission to improve the health and well-being of children by creating opportunities for safe, meaningful play. Deborah has overseen outreach and cultivation of donors, managed regional development budgets as well as programs to support development and community outreach

efforts. She loves exploring the city, especially if the destination involves good food or culture, or, preferably, both.

New LWVNYC Member Paulette Austin Brings a Lifetime of Experience

By Lynn Hall

Paulette Austin joined the League of Women Voters NYC earlier this year, but she has been working tirelessly with the organization for over 50 years. She began as an intern with the League in 1969, drawn by the LWV's commitment to fighting for important political issues, and influenced by her politically active family that fought for British Guyana's independence.

As a League volunteer, Paulette has focused on registering people to vote. She splits her time between Irving, Texas and NYC. In collaboration with Irving-area high school teachers, she gives civics lessons to students, encouraging them to get involved and make their voices heard, and registering them to vote.

The self-described highlight of her work has been registering people to vote at the US Citizenship and Immigration Service office in Irving. Over the course of five years, she has registered thousands of people who have just completed their citizenship ceremony. She is fluent in Spanish and French and uses these skills to connect with people and help them get acclimated to their new country.

Paulette also brings years of experience working for the UN to our NYC chapter. She coordinated UN efforts in South America, then worked as a Chief Procurement Officer in Lebanon, supplying all logistical support and services for UN Peacekeepers. She was also selected to join the 2021 UN Observers Corps (see article on page 3). She brings her "can-do" attitude and self-described "bulldozer" style to all that she does.

Welcome Paulette! We are so glad to have you as a new member of the LWVNYC!



Paulette Austin (second from left), Lobbying at Texas State House in Austin, TX

LWVNYC Committee Updates

Please feel free to email the Committees if you're interested in learning more and/or would like to get involved.

CENSUS AND REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Laura Quigg, Chair

census@lwnynyc.org

The Census and Redistricting Committee has followed and shared the developments of the NY State Independent Redistricting Commission and advocated for its full funding. In late April, we created a talk called "Redistricting 101" and added it to our Speakers Bureau repertoire. We continue to follow the release of Census2020 data, how the timeline may affect the redistricting process, and court cases involving the use of differential privacy to add noise to census data. Going forward, we will attend public hearings in NY State to the extent possible, utilize mapping software and programs, and generally cast a critical eye on the various developments.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Akyla Thomlinson, Vivione Marshall, and Michele Figueroa, Co-Chairs

criminaljustice@lwnynyc.org

With our two new co-chairs, Vivione Marshall and Michele Figueroa, the Committee for Criminal Justice Reform will continue its mission to advocate for the vulnerable in the criminal justice system and to lobby for legislation and policies that will correct the unfair system we now have. We will partner with organizations working in communities heavily impacted by over-policing, and will encourage our partners to civically engage their communities to vote and participate in the political process.

In the spring, the CCJR worked with the Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice and other groups to help get the "**Less is More**" Act passed in the June legislative session. It is a very important victory for parole and re-entry justice in our city and state.



Katal and "Less Is More" Campaign members advocating near City Hall in April

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Jane Hatterer, Chair

education@lwnynyc.org

The Education Committee continues its work with New York Youth Civics Initiative (NYYCI), soon to be Youth Civics Initiative (YCI), mentoring its movement correspondents, advising on strategy, supporting its expansion through partnerships both within and outside the League, and working with the NYC Department of Education through its Civics For All program (CFA) and Activist Mentor Project (AMP). We have continued our active participation in the DemocracyReadyNY Coalition and volunteered to be members of their emerging working groups, and the Harvard Civics Project League National Advisory Board.

We will continue to advocate for equity and access in education, with a focus on funding, digital inclusion, mental health support, and civic education.

GENDER JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Vivian B. Goldblatt and Cynthia Polk-Allen, Co-Chairs

genderjustice@lwnynyc.org

This summer, the newly-renamed Gender Justice Committee will be looking at three major issues: economic pay equity and wealth generation; health issues such as mortality in childbirth and abortion access; and domestic violence issues spanning all genders.

We will continue aligning with other League of Women Voters Chapters and complimentary community organizations. We will increase our committee membership to include more people interested in advocacy and support of relevant legislation. We will seek partnerships with the outgoing New York City Council and the newly elected council who will be seated in January. We will attend events and meetings with external organizations and follow City Council hearings; host monthly meetings; educate the public via social media, news articles and other op-ed pieces relevant to gender justice; and host our own events to increase solidarity. **To join us in these endeavors, please email: genderjustice@lwnynyc.org**

LWVNYC Committee Updates

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Joanna R. Leefter, Chair

programs@lwvnyc.org

The newly elected Biden administration and the upcoming NYC mayoral race offer the program committee many newsworthy topics for upcoming speaker programs. We are lining up speakers to discuss such topics as voters rights, criminal justice, and the impact of the census.

After over a year of offering speaker programs via Zoom, the Program Committee hopes to resume presenting live programs at the New York Society for Ethical Culture, possibly as early as October 2021. We hope to offer live lunches and evening programs but will continue to present some programs via Zoom, to accommodate speakers who are not available for live presentations.

VOTING REFORM COMMITTEE

Bella Wang, Chair

voting.reform@lwvnyc.org

The Voting Reform Committee has been busy meeting with state legislators to discuss the League's post-budget legislative priorities, including the New York State Voting Rights Act and absentee ballot improvements. This summer and fall, we will be looking to inform voters about November's referenda on same-day voter registration and no-excuse absentee voting.

VOTER SERVICES COMMITTEE

Laura Quigg, Gerry Russo, and Amy Matthews, Co-Chairs

voter.services@lwvnyc.org

Our committee has focused its efforts on Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) education and information, developing a new presentation on RCV; and on our "Who Makes NYC Run?" presentations, which explain the roles of different city government officeholders. We also continued to develop our other Speakers' Bureau talks focusing on women's history and civics education.

Our committee delivered over 50 talks to more than 2000 people throughout the (virtual) city, including the Brooklyn Public Library, Fortune Society, NYLCV, LiveOn-NY, and many others. We also created and printed a palm card with

information on RCV and important dates to distribute at in-person events. We have started outdoor events again – about 16 through June. Suzanne Surbeck has begun approaching public spaces including Governor's Island, and Pier 25 on the West Side, and is negotiating with Shakespeare in the Park.

In April, we worked with Ethical Culture/Fieldston School to help them get out 3000 RCV postcards. With a \$1000 grant from LWVNY, we will do our own GOTV postcard campaign in the Fall.

Unfortunately, we have had to cancel events due to a lack of volunteers, so we will redouble efforts on training and outreach, and **we encourage all interested members and volunteers to join.**

NEW: NONCITIZEN VOTING RIGHTS REVIEW

Diane Drew and Alex Yellin, Co-Chairs

office@lwvnyc.org

During the annual meeting, membership voted to review the LWV Boulder County position on noncitizen voting rights. This new committee will review the LWVBC position, and present its review to the LWV New York City.



Cathy Gray, Kate Doran, and Gabby Doran at a rally outside of Chuck Schumer's home in support of SR-1

Upcoming Events

All trainings and meetings held over Zoom.
Please contact admin@lwnyc.org to confirm meeting dates!
For more information on Committees and Events,
please visit www.lwnyc.org

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- Census and Redistricting Committee: 4th Wed. of the month; 6:00–7:30pm
- Committee for Criminal Justice Reform: check the website calendar for upcoming meetings and subcommittee meetings
- Education Committee: 2nd Wed. of the month; 5:30–7:00pm
- Voting Reform Initiative Committee: check the website calendar for upcoming meetings
- Voter Services Committee: 3rd Wed. of the month; 6:00–7:30pm
- Gender Justice Committee: check the website calendar for upcoming meetings

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