

Moving Communities Forward: Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean-Pierre

Jennifer Somma-Coughlin

Molloy College

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Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean-Pierre never set out to have a career in politics or to serve the diverse communities of Long Island. Yet, she has faced multiple obstacles to emerge as a dynamic Assemblywoman and an innovative social justice leader.

Jean-Pierre hails from Haitian immigrants and is originally from Brooklyn, New York (K. Jean-Pierre, personal communication, December 15, 2016). She originally aspired to be involved with educational policy. It was during the pursuit of her Master's Degree at Stony Brook University where she interned with Dr. Marsha Laufer, when Kimberly diverged from her original path recalling "something was missing" and she "fell in love with politics" under Laufer's tutelage (K. Jean-Pierre, personal communication, December 15, 2016). Her passion for social justice would be her guide on this ambitious path since as a Black woman, she would lack the privileges associated with those in the political field dominated by white males (Hardiman, Bailey, Griffin, 2013).

Jean-Pierre worked as legislative aide for Mr. DuWayne Gregory, Suffolk County legislator for two years. During that time, she worked with community leaders in diverse neighborhoods and became connected to the area. She continues to consult with Mr. Gregory and considers him a role model "because I know he has a passion for what he does" (K. Jean-Pierre, personal communication, December 15, 2016). In order to immerse herself deeper into Long Island politics, Kimberly Jean-Pierre went to work for Congressman Steve Israel as the District Community Outreach Coordinator. (New York State Assembly, 2016).

Kimberly has long been involved in the Haitian-American community. In January 2010, after a disastrous earthquake struck Haiti, Kimberly was spurred into action. She worked as the Vice President of Haitian Americans United for Change Inc. (HAUC), local community leaders

and government agencies to coordinate the Haiti Relief Project. She led the charge to organize and deliver collected goods and funds to those in need (New York State Assembly, 2016).

In 2013, Jean-Pierre came back to Long Island and became the Vice President of Properties at the Town of Babylon's Industrial Development Agency (IDA) (New York State Assembly, 2016). The Babylon IDA is responsible for providing incentives to companies to attract workers and retain jobs in the area. The IDA had been working closely with town officials, the community and the Wyandanch Rising Project which appealed to Kimberly (New York State Assembly, 2016). The Wyandanch Rising Project was established by local governments and developers to help bring new businesses and homes to Wyandanch which struggled with high poverty rates and high crime rates. (Will, 2013). Sustainable businesses would then be able to inject tax dollars into the fledgling school district which lacks resources and has a high dropout rate (ERASE Racism, 2009).

Kimberly Jean-Pierre then became the Director of the Town of Babylon's Wyandanch Resource Center. She oversaw projects and services at the center providing local residents the opportunity to continue their education and initiate careers through local unions and contractors.

Jean-Pierre was a member of the Class of 2014 of the Enegeia Partnership at Molloy College (New York State Assembly, 2016). There, Kimberly was able to further strengthen her skills as a powerful social justice leader in her community. "The Enegeia Partnership brings together a diverse group of ethical leaders from Long Island's public, private and not-for-profit sectors to help address this region's most complex issues: education, institutional racism, poverty and the working poor, land use, energy, transportation, healthcare and media/social networking" (Molloy College, 2016).

In 2014, Kimberly Jean-Pierre was encouraged to run for the New York State Assembly to represent the 11th District (K. Jean-Pierre, personal communication, December 15, 2016).

Kimberly Jean-Pierre faced many challenges as she ran as a Democrat for the New York State Assembly. She noted that voters often stereotype political candidates based on their gender. Although the communities that she was looking to serve were diverse, historically Black females struggle to attain the same authority as white males.

Jean-Pierre ran a successful campaign, promising to put families first and lower taxes in the 11th district. Kimberly shared that during her first term she faced challenges unique to working mothers in a field dominated by males. She was proud to explain that although it was challenging to become a new mother in office, she has always put her daughter first.

In November 2017, Kimberly Jean-Pierre was re-elected and continues to embody all that social justice leaders should aspire to be. She has worked diligently to learn, grow, help those in need, and collaborate to bring people together. Whether it is as a student, mother, volunteer, or leader, she has continued to help communities both near and far. “I’m working every day to protect the safety of our children and preserve our quality of life. I will continue fighting to ensure all New York families get the support and services they need to thrive.” (New York State Assembly, 2016).

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