



# **COMMENCEMENT**

## **CELEBRATING OUR 2024 GRADUATES**

**Wednesday, May 29, 2024, at 4:00 P.M.**

**Celeste Bartos Forum  
New York Public Library – Stephen A. Schwarzman Building  
476 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10018**

**CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies**





# **ABOUT THE CUNY SCHOOL OF LABOR AND URBAN STUDIES**

The CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies (SLU) offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs in Labor Studies and Urban Studies that are designed to meet the needs of working adults as well as traditional-age college students seeking to learn more about the challenges confronting poor and working-class populations in the workplace and the community.

The School also collaborates with other CUNY schools to offer a range of college-credit programs designed to provide workers with the academic and technical skills they need for professional advancement. Its faculty includes distinguished scholars in the social sciences as well as expert practitioners in government, labor, and public service. In addition to its academic programs, SLU sponsors research, organizes public forums and conferences, and publishes a national journal, *New Labor Forum: a journal of ideas, analysis, and debate*.

In 2018 SLU opened its doors as a self-standing school, an expansion of the Joseph S. Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies, named for the former CUNY Chancellor and tireless advocate for the labor movement and worker education. The Institute traces its roots to 1984, when CUNY collaborated with three New York City unions to establish a worker education program at Queens College. That program started with just 52 students.

Today, more than 1,500 students are enrolled in SLU's degree and certificate programs and in workforce development programs across the University, and the leaders of 27 labor and community organizations serve on SLU's Advisory Board. The Joseph S. Murphy Institute continues to be an integral element of the School, focusing on education for workers and union members and serving as a research and resource center for publications and public programming.

The vision for this School derives from its core values: access to education, diversity at every level, social justice, and equality for all. Its goals are to expand higher education opportunities for workers; prepare students who aspire to careers in public service and movements for social justice; promote civic engagement; provide leadership development for union and community activists; and help workers achieve greater economic security. Its perspective is unique, addressing the needs of its constituents while helping New York City and State fulfill their needs for a well-educated, highly skilled workforce.

To accomplish its goals, the School has four foundational pillars: Labor Studies, Urban Studies, Workforce Development, and Community Service. Of equal importance, these pillars support a range of intellectual aspirations and practical needs, and serve as a gateway to college for many workers and working-class communities.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| About the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies .....                          | 1  |
| CUNY Board of Trustees and Chancellery .....                                    | 3  |
| CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies Faculty and Administration.....          | 4  |
| Message From the Founding Dean.....   | 5  |
| CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies Labor and Community Advisory Board ..... | 6  |
| Message From the Labor and Community Advisory Board Chair.....                  | 7  |
| Order of Ceremony.....  | 8  |
| Commencement Speakers and Honorees.....   | 11 |
| CUNY Board of Trustees Vice Chairperson.....                                    | 11 |
| City University of New York Chancellor.....                                     | 12 |
| Valedictorian.....  | 13 |
| Salutatorian.....   | 14 |
| Master’s Symbolic Recipient .....   | 15 |
| Keynote Speaker and Honorary Degree Recipient.....                              | 16 |
| Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient.....                                       | 17 |
| Names of Graduates and Candidates .....   | 18 |
| Certificates in Community Leadership.....                                       | 19 |
| Certificates in Healthcare Advocacy.....  | 19 |
| Certificates in Public Administration and Public Policy.....                    | 19 |
| Certificate in The Urban Experience.....  | 20 |
| Advanced Certificate in Workplace Democracy and Community Ownership.....        | 20 |
| Certificates in Labor Relations.....  | 21 |
| Certificates in Labor Studies.....  | 21 |
| Bachelor of Arts in Urban and Community Studies.....                            | 22 |
| Bachelor of Arts in Labor Studies.....  | 22 |
| Master of Arts in Urban Studies .....   | 22 |
| Master of Arts in Labor Studies .....   | 22 |
| Commencement Traditions and Symbols .....                                       | 23 |
| Musical Lyrics.....   | 24 |
| Special Thanks .....  | 25 |

# THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

William C. Thompson, Jr., B.A.  
*Chairperson*

Sandra Wilkin, B.S., B.S.,  
*Vice Chairperson*

Michael Arvanites, B.A.

Henry T. Berger, B.S., J.D.

Una S. T-Clarke, B.S., M.S., C.D.

Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, B.A., M.P.A.

Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel, Ph.D.

Kevin D. Kim, B.A., M.A., J.D.

Mayra Linares-Garcia, B.A.

Robert F. Mujica, B.A., M.G.A., J.D.

Brian D. Obergfell, B.S., J.D.

Jill O'Donnell-Tormey, B.S. Ph.D.

Herminia Palacio, M.D., M.P.H.

Ken Sunshine, B.S.

Angelo Vivolo, B.S.

John Verzani, Ph.D.

*Ex-Officio - Chair of the University Faculty Senate*

Salimatou Doumbouya

*Ex-Officio – Chair of the University Student Senate*

## CHANCELLORY

### Chancellor

Félix V. Matos Rodríguez

#### **Executive Vice Chancellor & University Provost**

Wendy Hensel

#### **Executive Vice Chancellor & Chief Operating Officer**

Hector Batista

#### **Senior Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs & General Counsel**

Derek Davis

#### **Senior Vice Chancellor for Institutional Affairs & Strategic Advancement and Special Counsel**

Glenda Grace

#### **Vice Chancellor of Human Resources and Labor Relations**

Doriane K. Gloria

#### **Senior Vice Chancellor for budget & Finance and Chief Financial Officer**

Sherif Soliman

#### **Vice Chancellor for Academic & Faculty Affairs**

Alicia M. Alvero

#### **Vice Chancellor for Facilities Planning, Construction and Management**

Mohamed Attalla

#### **Vice Chancellor for Technology & University Chief Information Officer**

Eusebio Fomoso

#### **Vice Chancellor for University Advancement**

James Gallo

#### **Vice Chancellor for Communications and Marketing**

Maite Junco

#### **Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs**

Denise B. Maybank

#### **Vice Chancellor for Government Affairs**

Jeffrey Rodus

#### **Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management**

Reine T. Sarmiento

#### **Chancellor's Chief of Staff &**

#### **Associate Vice Chancellor for the Executive Office**

Dolly Martínez

#### **Chief Transformation Officer**

Rachel Stephenson

#### **Senior Advisor to the Chancellor & Secretary of the Board of Trustees**

Gayle M. Horwitz

# CUNY SCHOOL OF LABOR AND URBAN STUDIES FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION

**Gregory Manstios, Ph.D.**  
*Founding Dean*

**Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers, M.S., P.D., M.A., Ed.D.**  
*Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs*

**Burton Sacks, M.S., M.S.**  
*Associate Dean for Administration and Operations*

**Meghan Moore-Wilk, Ph.D.**  
*Interim Assistant Dean for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff*

## FACULTY

**Ruth Milkman, Ph.D.**  
*Distinguished Professor & Chair of Labor Studies*

**Steve London, Ph.D.**  
*Associate Professor & Chair of Urban Studies*

**Sofya Aptekar, Ph.D.**  
*Associate Professor of Urban Studies*

**Kafui Attoh, Ph.D.**  
*Associate Professor of Urban Studies*

**Juan Battle, Ph.D.**  
*Presidential Professor, Graduate Center & Consortial Faculty*

**Cameron Black, Ph.D.**  
*Assistant Professor of Labor Studies*

**Yolande Cadore, Ed.D.**  
*Substitute Assistant Professor of Urban Studies*

**Ellen Dichner, J.D.**  
*Distinguished Lecturer of Labor Studies*

**Alethia Jones, Ph.D.**  
*Distinguished Lecturer of Labor Studies*

**Penelope Lewis, Ph.D.**  
*Associate Professor of Labor Studies*

**Stephanie Luce, Ph.D.**  
*Professor of Labor Studies*

**James Rodriguez, Ph.D.**  
*Assistant Professor of Urban Studies*

**Samir Sonti, Ph.D.**  
*Assistant Professor of Urban Studies*

**Michael Stack, Ph.D. Candidate**  
*Substitute Lecturer of Urban Studies*

## ADMINISTRATION

**Dorothy Benson, B.A.**  
*Director of Finance and Business Affairs*

**Violet Bube, M.S.**  
*Manager of Human Resources*

**Shannon Clarke, M.A.**  
*Director of Enrollment*

**Maryam (Sara) Esfarayeni, Ed.D.**  
*Director, Worker Education & Workforce Development*

**Michael Giliberti, M.P.A.**  
*Director, Bursar and Scholarships*

**Stephen Greenfeld, Ph.D.**  
*Retention and Prior Learning Assessment Manager*

**Laurie Grimes, M.A.**  
*Enrollment Registrar Director*

**Antoinette Isable-Jones, B.A.**  
*Chief Communications & Marketing Officer*

**Maureen LaMar, M.S.**  
*Manager of Institutional and Academic Partnerships*

**Rochel Pinder, Ed.D.**  
*Director of Student and Community Affairs*

**Christopher Policano**  
*Director of External Relations*

**Jeff Rickman**  
*Director of Technology*

**Elizabeth Sergile, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate**  
*Director of Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness*

**Sarah Watson, M.A.**  
*Director of the Center for Public Engagement*

## MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDING DEAN



Dear SLU Class of 2024:

Congratulations to you and your families on reaching this significant milestone in your lives!

When CUNY's Board of Trustees established the School of Labor and Urban Studies in 2018, they laid the foundation for a distinctive institution catering to a diverse student body, including union members, community activists, and individuals passionate about public service and social change. As members of this unique community, you are part of a cohort dedicated to making a positive impact in the world while advancing your own knowledge and careers.

I encourage you to maintain your optimism, thirst for knowledge, and dedication to effecting change. I suspect these qualities drew many of you to SLU in the first place, and have motivated you to pursue lives of significance and influence. By embracing these values, you will honor our University and School, leading the charge to improve workplaces, communities, and the world.

Each of you has a vital role to play in addressing the systemic issues of racism and economic inequality that plague our nation. We trust in your commitment to utilizing the knowledge, experiences, and credentials gained at SLU for the common good.

Also, I encourage you to remain an active member of the CUNY and SLU community. Continue your educational journey by enrolling in additional certificate and degree programs, and by participating in SLU's public forums and conferences; support others in their academic endeavors by sharing your own experiences, together, let us contribute to the ongoing legacy of the School of Labor and Urban Studies. Please remember to join the SLU Alumni Association.

Again, my warmest congratulations and my very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gregory Mantsios".

Gregory Mantsios, Ph.D.  
Founding Dean  
CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies

# CUNY SCHOOL OF LABOR AND URBAN STUDIES

## LABOR AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

### University Representatives

Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Chancellor, The City University of New York  
Kafui Attoh, Chair, Academic Governing Council, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies  
Ruth Milkman, Labor Studies Chair, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies  
Steve London, Urban Studies Chair, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies

### New York State AFL-CIO

Mario Cilento, President

### New York City Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO

Vincent Alvarez, President

### Local 1180, Communications Workers of America (CWA)

Gloria Middleton, President

\* Arthur Cheliotis, *Board Chair*

### District Council 37, American Federation of State, County, & Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

Henry Garrido, Executive Director

(alt. Barbara Ingram-Edmonds, Director of Field Operations; alt. Stephen Johnson, Administrator, Education Fund)

### Workers United (SEIU)

Edgar Romney, Secretary-Treasurer

### 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East

George Gresham, President

(alt. Samantha Morales, Director of Education & Leadership Development)

### 1199 SEIU Training and Upgrading Fund

Sandi Vito, Executive Director

### United Federation of Teachers (UFT)

Michael Mulgrew, President

(alt. Mary Vaccaro, Vice President of Education)

### Public Employees Federation (PEF)

Wayne Spence, President

(alt. Darlene William, Vice President)

### Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), Region 2

Lester Crockett, President

(alt. Matthew D'Amico, Political Action Coordinator)

### Local 237, International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)

Gregory Floyd, President

(alt. Shanell Grayson, Director of Education)

### Consortium for Worker Education (CWE)

Joseph McDermott, Executive Director

(alt. Deborah Buxton, Deputy Director of Education)

### Local 32BJ, Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

Manny Pastreich, President

(alt. Lenore Friedlaender, Assistant to the President;  
alt. Linda Nelson, Director of Thomas Shortman Training Fund)

### Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100

Richard Davis, President

(alt. Charles Jenkins, Director, Training and Upgrading Fund)

### Local 94, International Union of Operating Engineers

Kuba Brown, Business Manager/Financial

Secretary (alt. David Hakins, Director of Training)

### Local 1549, NYC Clerical-Administrative Employees

James Howell, Administrator

(alt. Benjamin Borges-Hernandez, Deputy Administrator)

### Professional Staff Congress (PSC)

James Davis, President

### Writers Guild of America, East (WGAE)

### Region 9A, United Auto Workers (UAW)

Brandon Mancilla, Director

(alt. Ken Lang, Sub-Regional Director for New York City)

### Local 371, Social Service Employees Union (SSEU)

Anthony Wells, President

### District 1, Communications Workers of America (CWA)

Dennis G. Trainor, Vice President, CWA District 1

(alt. vacant)

### New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health

Charlene Obernauer, Executive Director

### Community Voices Heard

Juanita Lewis, Executive Director

### New York Communities for Change

Jonathan Westin, Executive Director

### New York Immigration Coalition

Murad Awawdeh, Executive Director

### New York State Nurses Association

Nancy Hagans, President

### State & Broadway, Inc.

Richard Winsten, Esq.

### The NewsGuild of New York

Susan DeCarava, President

---

\* denotes Advisory Board Chair



# MESSAGE FROM THE LABOR AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR



Congratulations, Graduates!

I have been privileged to serve as Chair of the Advisory Board of CUNY's School for Labor and Urban Studies since SLU was established in 2018. The Board, which is comprised of the leaders of 27 labor unions and community organizations, has partnered with University leaders and distinguished scholars to create a unique School with a unique mission.

Working women and men are the lifeblood of our city and nation. SLU is a reflection of that essential truth. Our goal has always been to expand educational opportunities for workers and working-class communities and to provide education for social justice and social change. Over the years, the organizations represented on our Board have provided the resources that make it possible for union members and activists to achieve their dreams of completing an education.

We are here today to celebrate the class of 2024 and to thank all those who have supported you over the last several years. The global pandemic that wrought havoc on our city and our country did not stop you from achieving your goals. You found the strength and resilience to persevere, even though the learning community was fractured, and classes were remote. The majority of you also managed to work and care for your families at the same time. Some of you even lost loved ones. I and the entire Advisory Board salute your determination and fortitude along with your academic achievements.

We are very proud that you chose SLU. It says that you want to make a difference—you want a better world for yourself and your family; better working conditions for you and your colleagues; and an end to the racism and economic inequality that plague our society. Armed with the degrees and certificates you have earned, you have an opportunity to become leaders in your unions and community organizations and to participate more fully in the political process. We urge you on! Making your contribution to social justice is the ultimate way to give back to the School of Labor and Urban Studies.

Again, congratulations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arthur Cheliotis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Arthur Cheliotis,  
Advisory Board Chair

**COMMENCEMENT 2024**  
**ORDER OF CEREMONY**

**Rose Imperato**  
*Commencement Master of Ceremonies*

**PROCESSIONAL**

**Alethia Jones**  
*Commencement Grand Marshal*

**ANTHEMS**

**The Star-Spangled Banner**  
*United States Marine Band*

**Solidarity Forever**  
*Nicole Alifante, vocals*  
*Karry Faselt Hopwood, vocals and guitar*  
*Al Hemberger, The Loft Recording Studios*

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

**PRESIDING**

**Gregory Mantsios**  
*Founding Dean*

**GREETINGS FROM THE  
CUNY TRUSTEES AND CHANCELLERY**

**Michael Arvanites**  
*Trustee, City University of New York*

**Félix V. Matos Rodríguez**  
*Chancellor, City University of New York*

**VALEDICTORIAN ADDRESS**

**Jennifer Okafor**  
*Bachelor of Arts in Urban and Community Studies*

**COMMENCEMENT 2024**  
**ORDER OF CEREMONY (CONT'D)**

---

**MESSAGE TO GRADUATES**

**MASTER'S SYMBOLIC RECIPIENT**

**Aflon R. McIver**  
*Master of Arts in Labor Studies*

**CONFERRING OF THE HONORARY DEGREE**

**Gregory Mantsios**  
*Founding Dean*

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER AND  
HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENT**

**Deepak Bhargava**  
*Author, activist, distinguished lecturer and  
President of JPB Foundation*

**DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENT**

**Neonne Ameer**  
*Advanced Certificate in Community Leadership &  
Master of Arts in Urban Studies, 2020*

**PASSING OF THE TORCH**

**Walter Romney**  
*Receptionist; Author, "Passing the Torch"*

**Cory Rohr**  
*Executive Assistant, Office of Academic Affairs*

**Jaime Johnson**  
*Master of Arts in Urban Studies, Co-Chair, SLU Student Union*

**Lily Wilk**  
*Advanced Certificate in Community Leadership*

**COMMENCEMENT 2024**  
**ORDER OF CEREMONY (CONT'D)**

---

**PRESENTATION OF THE GRADUATES AND  
CONFERRAL OF DEGREES**

**Gregory Mantsios**  
*Founding Dean*

**Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers**  
*Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs*

**Rose Imperato**  
*Commencement Master of Ceremonies*

**CLOSING REMARKS**

**Alethia Jones**  
*Commencement Grand Marshal*

**RECESSIONAL**

## COMMENCEMENT 2024 SPEAKERS AND HONOREES



### **CUNY BOARD OF TRUSTEES VICE CHAIR OF THE BOARD'S STUDENT LIFE COMMITTEE MICHAEL ARVANITES**

MICHAEL ARVANITES, B.A., a native Staten Islander, serves as Staten Island's Trustee to the City University of New York; having been unanimously approved by the State Senate and appointed by Mayor Bill DeBlasio, effective July 1, 2017, for a term that ends in 2024.

The Board of Trustees provides oversight for half a million students faculty and staff at 25 campuses. He is the Head Surveyor for the New York City Board of Elections responsible for the accessibility, pandemic protocol and safety compliance for early voting and poll sites. Michael has served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Assemblyman Eric Vitaliano, Councilman Michael McMahon and State Senator Diane Savino as well as Liaison to Speaker of the City Council, Christine Quinn. Michael has also worked on many campaigns.

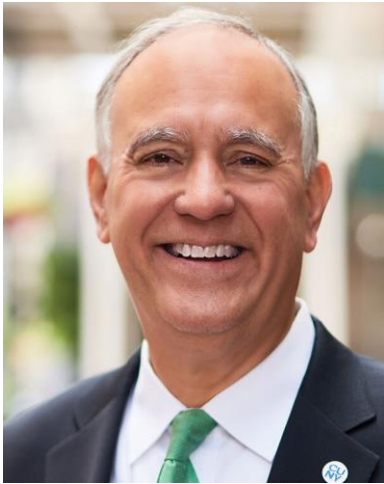
When working for private industry he provided safety, training and advocacy to the transportation and construction industries serving as VP of Operations for the Black Car Fund representing 25,000 drivers and 2,500 safety professionals as the CEO of the Safety Professional Association.

Michael, an Eagle Scout, started volunteering very early in life, for On Your Mark INC, and the Eden II School for the Disabled; where his brother Steven is a participant and lives with Autism. Advocacy for those with disabilities drove Michael into politics, advocating for group homes at civic meetings beginning at the age of seven years old. Michael also started volunteering for Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church's annual Greek Festival that year too. Michael also serves as the Red Cross' Ambassador to Staten Island and serves as a team leader for the Annual Bread of Life Food Drive.

He is a board member for Eden II School for the Disabled and formerly served on the Board of Directors for United Activities Unlimited, Community Health Action of Staten Island and the Seaman's Society for Children as well as on the Foundation Board for Community Resources. Michael Arvanites lives in the Sunnyside neighborhood of Staten Island.

Mr. Arvanites, serves as Vice Chair of the Board's Student Life Committee, and is a member of the Audit Committee and the Committee on Facilities Planning and Management.

## **COMMENCEMENT 2024 SPEAKERS AND HONOREES**



### **CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK CHANCELLOR FÉLIX V. MATOS RODRÍGUEZ**

Félix V. Matos Rodríguez is the eighth Chancellor of The City University of New York (CUNY), and the first educator of color and the first Latino to lead the nation's largest urban public university, which serves 225,000 degree-seeking students across 25 New York City campuses.

An accomplished and award-winning historian who worked at three CUNY campuses before his appointment as chancellor on May 1, 2019, Matos Rodríguez is driven by his belief in CUNY's unparalleled effectiveness in propelling students up the economic ladder, along with the interconnected role the University plays in lifting New York.

To build on CUNY's unrivaled role as an engine of economic mobility, Matos Rodríguez has focused on removing barriers to students' success. The Chancellor has redoubled CUNY's emphasis on the career outcomes of its graduates, developing a series of public-private partnerships with some of New York's largest employers and new pipelines for students to enter the workforce.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic during the first year of his tenure, the Chancellor oversaw the system's swift pivot to remote learning and worked to guide the University through the many challenges that emerged. The Chancellor's Emergency Relief Fund, launched in April 2020, provided grants to thousands of CUNY students, including undocumented students who were excluded from financial relief by the federal government. Using federal Higher Education Emergency Relief funds, CUNY erased more than \$100 million in unpaid tuition and fees for more than 57,000 students and ended the practice of holding transcripts of students with outstanding balances.

Driven by a deeply held commitment to accessibility, inclusion and excellence in higher education, Matos Rodríguez has built a diverse team of tested leaders to serve on his cabinet and has appointed a diverse, highly accomplished group of 14 college presidents and deans.

A historian, he has served the University for nearly 25 years as a member of the faculty at Hunter College and director of Hunter's Center for Puerto Rican Studies (CENTRO), and as president of Hostos Community College and Queens College. He left CUNY for several years in 2005, returning to his native Puerto Rico to serve as an adviser to the governor and, later, as Secretary of the Department of Family Services. Matos Rodríguez holds a B.A. from Yale University and a doctorate in history from Columbia University.

## COMMENCEMENT 2024 SPEAKERS AND HONOREES



### VALEDICTORIAN JENNIFER OKAFOR

Jennifer Okafor currently works in the healthcare field and has been in this profession for over 5 years. Jennifer appreciates every single aspect of her work due to the flexibility that it gave her to be able to attend school while employed.

Jennifer was born in Nigeria, but grew up in Bronx, New York. Her family moved to New York when she was about 10 years old.

Jennifer attended three other colleges before coming to SLU; Herkimer County Community College (where she earned her associate degree in criminal Justice), SUNY Old Westbury, and Hostos Community College. Prior to attending SLU, Jennifer took what she thought would've been just a semester off from college after her biological father was tragically killed in a car accident. A semester turned into a full school year, then a year turned to three years. At some point, Jennifer gave up and lost the motivation to go back to finish school until someone recommended, she to apply to SLU.

Jennifer is proud of herself for returning to school to finish what she started. Her accomplishment today is a testament to everyone that through determination, your goals can be attained. This has always been one of the mantras that Jennifer's mother instilled in her and her siblings. Her tenacity to succeed in life gave Jennifer the solid foundation to establish herself academically and professionally.

Jennifer is also appreciative and grateful to SLU, her professors, and her advisor for facilitating and giving her such a supporting, safe, and positive learning platform to be able to complete this chapter of her education. Jennifer's time at SLU and some of the courses that she has taken, especially her urban studies classes, has given her insight and challenged her to pay closer attention to the different crisis consuming our city. It has motivated her to work towards becoming a part of the solution, rather than complaining about the problems. Jennifer's research focus includes quality education, healthcare, housing, infrastructure, homelessness, our justice system and the laws and policies that surround it.

After Graduation, Jennifer plans to continue her education by pursuing a graduate degree at SLU.

## COMMENCEMENT 2024 SPEAKERS AND HONOREES



### SALUTATORIAN BRIAN HUNT

Brian Hunt is a Labor Studies major here at CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies. He will be graduating this Spring with a bachelor's degree and applying to a graduate program at Rutgers University this Fall.

Throughout his tenure at CUNY, Brian has been an active participant in various organizations and programs. He proudly serves as an elected member of the CUNY Faculty-Student Disciplinary Committee and has completed two certificate programs in Labor Studies and Labor Relations with flying colors. Additionally, Brian is a member of Community Board 1 in Queens, where he utilizes his skills and knowledge gained through his CUNY experience to contribute to his community's betterment.

Brian is a proud member of Steamfitters Local 638. Since beginning his apprenticeship training program in 2007, he has continued to learn and grow under the guidance of his instructors and mentors at the training center. Today, Brian serves as an elected Business Agent and remains steadfast in advocating for the rights and interests of his members and local union.

Brian's accomplishments are truly remarkable and speak volumes about his unwavering commitment to excellence. He is an inspiration for all students aspiring to make a positive difference in their communities.



**COMMENCEMENT 2024  
SPEAKERS AND HONOREES**



**MASTER'S SYMBOLIC  
RECIPIENT  
AFLON R. MCIVER**

Aflon R. McIver grew up in NYCHA's Marcy Houses in Brooklyn. In 2001, she went on to obtain her bachelor's degree in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Upon graduating Afion began her career with the New York City Department of Homeless Services in 2002 and has since been with the agency 23years serving in the capacities of Associate Fraud Investigator and now, Administrative Community Relations Specialist.

After becoming a union delegate, under the leadership and guidance of Social Services Employee Union, Local 371, Afion perused graduate studies at CUNY School and Labor and Urban Studies. She was awarded the Charles Ensley Scholarship by Local 371 in January of 2023 and has gone on to receive an Advanced Certificate in Labor in June of 2022 and a Master's degree in Labor Studies in December of 2023.

She is a member of New Canaan Baptist Church in Brooklyn, The National Association of Black Social Worker, NABSW, serving on the Fundraising Committee, and the National Association of University Women, INC, NAUW.

Her most gratifying accomplishment has been raising her two daughters Brylan, 11 and Akasha, 19, who is currently a sophomore at St Johns University. "I am thankful for my spirit; perseverance and I constantly challenge myself with being comfortable with the uncomfortable. Don't talk yourself out of rooms you've earned the right to be in". Your contributions matter!

## COMMENCEMENT 2024 SPEAKERS AND HONOREES



### KEYNOTE SPEAKER AND HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENT DEEPAK BHARGAVA

Deepak Bhargava was born in Bangalore, India. His family emigrated to New York City, and he grew up in the Bronx. Deepak graduated from Harvard University in 1990 with a degree in Social Studies and then began his career at ACORN, where he served as legislative director and spokesperson.

In 1994, he joined the Center for Community Change (CCC), as the Director of Public Policy. In 2000, he directed the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support (NCJIS), a coalition of grassroots groups working on federal welfare law. NCJIS describes itself as “a collaboration of grassroots organizations, advocates and think tanks working together to promote jobs and income security at the national level.” In 2002, he became the executive director of the CCC. In this capacity, his work focused on immigration reform, and with other immigration activists, he helped launch the Fair Immigration Reform movement. Deepak was arrested outside of the White House while protesting immigration law in 2011, and he is credited with having convinced President Barack Obama to reduce deportation of undocumented immigrants in 2012. He also spearheaded the creation of Generation Change, a CCC program that “recruits, trains and places the next generation of community organizers,” and CCC’s Voting Project, which aims to increase the participation of low-income voters in the electoral process.

In 2019, Deepak joined the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies as a Distinguished Lecturer of Urban Studies. He is a policy expert on issues of poverty, economic justice and racial equity. He was instrumental in the creation of Leadership for Democracy and Social Justice, an institute of the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership at City College of New York and the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies. LDSJ offers national programming focused on early and midcareer leadership development for individuals leading social justice movements. The institute aims to build sustainable power across disciplines and with the communities that are at the forefront of social change.

In November 2023, Deepak and his co-author, SLU Professor Stephanie Luce released their book *Practical Radicals: Seven Strategies to Change the World*, to excellent reviews. “A clear, expert, and inspiring guide to social change, based on case studies of grassroots movements that won, from two leading community and labor experts,” says Goodreads.com. “As the authors argue convincingly, a successful labor movement should step beyond questions of pay and hours and instead examine matters such as structural racism, educating while agitating. Progressive activists will want to dog-ear, underline and pore over this well-conceived handbook,” according to Kirkus Reviews.

In February 2024, Deepak became President of the JPB Foundation, directing the formidable resources of the foundation to addressing the crisis of democracy by focusing on building power across movements, investing in organizing and social movements, and strengthening movement infrastructure.

His work has appeared in such publications as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Nation*, *The American Prospect*, and the *Huffington Post*. He has served on the boards of the Center for Law and Social Policy, Discount Foundation, Open Society Foundations, League of Education Voters, Bauman Foundation, The JPB Foundation and National Immigration Forum Action Fund. Deepak continues to support SLU through on-going engagement.

## **COMMENCEMENT 2024 SPEAKERS AND HONOREES**



### **DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENT NEONNE AMEER**

Neonne Ameer, a dedicated educator committed to social justice, holds a Bachelor's in History from Lehman College and her Master's in Urban Studies from CUNY SLU (2020), and is the first in her family to have achieved this feat. With a background in history and education, she taught social studies before transitioning to non-profit work. Currently pursuing a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialization in Curriculum Evaluation and Research at Barry University, Neonne's determination and passion for education continue to shine through.

From her early start in education at thirteen, she has gained a deep understanding of the field's challenges and opportunities. Neonne's commitment to inclusive and comprehensive education is evident in her efforts to write curricula addressing societal needs. Alongside her academic pursuits, Neonne actively contributes to her school communities including by volunteering at community events, leading study sessions, and engaging in faculty interviews.

During her time at SLU, Neonne founded SLU's student union and developed a robust governance structure to support current and future student leadership. Neonne's leadership, organizational skills, and dedication to positive change exemplify her remarkable educational contributions.

## **NAMES OF GRADUATES AND CANDIDATES**

*Note: As printing of this program is placed in advance, the lists of certificate and degree candidates are tentative. A student's transcript is the official record of the School.*

**COMMENCEMENT 2024**  
**CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS**

**DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES**

**CERTIFICATES IN  
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

***Fall 2023 Graduates***

***ADVANCED CERTIFICATE***

Vincent Corletta  
Stephanie Dobranski  
LaShawn Edwards  
Perrian Glasby  
Emily McCormick  
Maricela Ramirez  
Ali Raza  
Tricia Smith  
Issiaka Sow  
Adilene Tehuitzil

***Spring 2024 Candidates***

***CERTIFICATE***

Gaoussou Koita  
Ronald Rivera  
Shanei Castro  
Tyshon Prysock

***ADVANCED CERTIFICATE***

Esteban Ayala  
Teresa Marie Anna Bello  
Edwin Carrion  
Erika Inamagua  
Margaret Jones  
Victoria Morey  
Sandra Soriano  
Yudelka Vasquez  
Natalya Bennett  
Celia Kim  
Danielle Lake  
Maura Schlagel  
Steven Tarquinio  
Rudine Wright

**ADVANCED CERTIFICATES IN  
LEADING CHANGE IN  
HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS**

***Spring 2024 Candidates***

***ADVANCED CERTIFICATE***

Ulrielle Souffrant  
Christina Sparrock

**CERTIFICATES IN  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
AND PUBLIC POLICY**

***Fall 2023 Graduates***

***ADVANCED CERTIFICATE***

Daniel Carinci  
Brian McGrady

***Spring 2024 Candidates***

***ADVANCED CERTIFICATE***

Allison Ball  
Robert Donate  
Matthew Klepfer  
Jennifer McDonnell  
Nicole Monteiro  
Steven Nunez  
Miguel Pena  
Debra Plafker-Gutt

**COMMENCEMENT 2024**  
**CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS**

**CERTIFICATE IN THE URBAN EXPERIENCE**

***Summer 2024 Candidates***

***CHALLENGE HIGH SCHOOL***

Temí Abdul  
Racheal Ajayi  
Jean A. Avila  
Victor D. Balogun  
Quinton L. Blakes  
Rokhaya Dabo  
Art Egberongbe  
Caitlin T. Goodluck  
Akeelah A. Green  
Malaika E. Lewis  
Lorenzo D. Paulino  
Armary J. Petit-Paul  
Kamayah D. Pruitt  
Shaniya A. Spooner  
Alona Williams  
Jerrod Whynter

***CLARA BARTON HIGH SCHOOL***

Adarian Amede Baker  
Oluwadamilola Atolagbe  
Miah Billingham  
Christopher Bryce  
Kerrin Frederick-Regis  
Kelicia George  
Esther Grandpierre  
Ambereen Hussain  
Bill Michel  
Shuang Pierre-St Surin  
Sahara Price  
Alvaro Sanchez  
Damira Smith  
Keyara Williamson

***JOHN ADAMS HIGH SCHOOL***

Ariana Albardonado  
Nadiya Y Carter  
Tahlia NC Cooke  
Analiz Henriquez  
Anastasia Ilic  
Naviah Grace Izquierdo  
Steven A Kelley  
Paige E Kennedy  
Jessica B Lopera  
Swarsattie A Mania  
Shazana Narine  
Brianna N Navarrete  
Eshannie Rampersaud  
Christian Jullian Thyme  
Fatima Tog Zahra

**ADVANCED CERTIFICATE IN WORKPLACE DEMOCRACY AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP**

***Spring 2024 Candidates***

***ADVANCED CERTIFICATE***

Sabrina Bazile  
Alexander Bortfeld  
Catherine Fireman

**COMMENCEMENT 2024**  
**CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS**

**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR STUDIES**

**CERTIFICATES IN LABOR RELATIONS**

***Fall 2023 Graduates***

***CERTIFICATE***

Tameka Staples

***ADVANCED CERTIFICATE***

Valarie LaMour

Kasha Pazdar

Julia Smith

Martha Smith

***Spring 2024 Candidates***

***CERTIFICATE***

Shavrah Brown

Michael Fallon

***ADVANCED CERTIFICATE***

Gina Etienne

Jose Gonzalez

June Lei

Laura Saint Jean

**CERTIFICATES IN LABOR STUDIES**

***Fall 2023 Graduates***

***ADVANCED CERTIFICATE***

Dustin Belsha

Miriam Frank

Benjamin Hyams

Zhuotong Li

Harry Mikkleson

Rudolph Rodriguez-Quamina

***Spring 2024 Candidates***

***ADVANCED CERTIFICATE***

Conor Arpey

Stuart Baum

Daniel Kaplowitz

Patrick McCann

Emily Grace Scurrah

Natalie Cassar

Maggie Debnam

Kelly O'Hern

Uros Petrovic

# COMMENCEMENT 2024

## DEGREE PROGRAMS

### BACHELOR OF ARTS IN URBAN AND COMMUNITY STUDIES

#### *Fall 2023 Graduates*

Jennifer Okafor  
Tereza Sharpe

#### *Spring 2024 Candidates*

Infinite George \*  
Lilah Mejia  
Shereene Rochester

### BACHELOR OF ARTS IN LABOR STUDIES

#### *Spring 2024 Candidates*

Brian Hunt

### MASTER OF ARTS IN URBAN STUDIES

#### *Fall 2023 Graduates*

Wildelinda Dominguez  
Joshua Goodman  
Nicole Nester  
Morgan Oppenheimer  
Dionne Williams

#### *Spring 2024 Candidates*

Vivian Burns  
Miguel Davila  
Hawa Fainke  
Nicholas Gulotta  
James Johnson  
Candace Joseph  
Karen Mardenborough  
Robert Persons  
Amy Rice  
Kim Riley  
Amanda Trainor  
Bolaji Ayorinde

### MASTER OF ARTS IN LABOR STUDIES

#### *Fall 2023 Graduates*

Fabio Arceyut  
Alvin Baugh  
Anu Biswas  
Daniel Goldman  
Aflon Mclver  
Andrew Pezzullo  
Tanisha Smith  
Miriam Uribe Martinez \*  
Maria Uruchima

#### *Spring 2024 Candidates*

Amanda Ayala  
Melissa Bautista  
Zara Cadoux  
Gabriel Feldman-Schwartz  
Max Fisher  
Gina Grattan  
Jules Grifferty  
Daniel Harrypaul  
Juanita del Rosario Mejia Gutierrez  
Ryan Montalto  
Jacob Nardone  
Andrew Parkinson  
Rebecca Ramnarine  
Merle Ratner \*\*  
Dana Steer  
Sebastian Witherspoon

---

\* Joseph S. Murphy Scholarship for Diversity in Labor

\*\* Posthumous Degree



# **COMMENCEMENT TRADITIONS AND SYMBOLS**

## **ACADEMIC REGALIA**

The academic regalia dates back to the Middle Ages, when learned persons at the time wore long hooded cloaks to fend off the cold within rock castle walls. The traditional attire was transported to this world when Kings College, Columbia University, first began using it for its commencement ceremony. This practice was codified in 1895 by the National Conference on Academic-Costume and Ceremony and a plan known initially as the “Intercollegiate System” was formally adopted. Today, commencement exercises across American universities all carry on the traditional costume and conduct the ceremony with three essential elements: the academic procession, the conferring of degrees, and the Commencement address.

Those with doctoral degrees wear the longest hood. The intermediate length designates a master’s degree and a shorter length, a bachelor’s degree. Medieval practice associated certain colors with specific academic pursuits. The silk-lined hoods represent a specific field of study with an official color trim (Citron: Labor and Urban Studies).

## **THE SCHOOL SEAL**

The School seal is in a circular shape, with silver and warm red hues. The School name circles around the logo, and inside the seal, is an open book, with the left page highlighting a gear, and the other urban life. These symbols represent the core values of the School: access to education, diversity at every level, social justice, and equality for all.

## **THE MACE / GRAND MARSHAL**

The Mace, carried by the Grand Marshal, dates back to 12,000 B.C., when it was used as a weapon during battle. Today, the mace is carried at all academic ceremonies and is used to represent the responsibility to protect our education institutions and often times represents the core values of an institution. The Grand Marshal, carrying the Mace at Commencement and Convocation, heralds the arrival of the academic procession and concludes the ceremony.

## **VALEDICTORIAN**

An undergraduate student, typically having the highest academic achievements of the class, who delivers the valedictory at a commencement ceremony.

## **SALUTATORIAN**

An undergraduate student that possesses high academic achievements, who is recognized at commencement ceremony.

## **MASTERS SYMBOLIC RECIPIENT**

A graduate student that possesses high academic achievements and represents students by delivering an address at commencement.

# MUSICAL LYRICS

## THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

*Lyrics by Francis Scott Key (1814), Music by John Stafford Smith (c. 1773)*

O say can you see by the dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,  
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,  
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.  
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

## SOLIDARITY FOREVER

*Lyrics by Ralph Chaplin (c. 1915), Music by Traditional  
Sung to the tune of "John Brown's Body" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"*

When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run,  
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun;  
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one,  
But the union makes us strong.

Solidarity forever,  
Solidarity forever,  
Solidarity forever,

For the union makes us strong.

Is there aught we hold in common with the greedy parasite, Who  
would lash us into serfdom and would crush us with his might?

Is there anything left to us but to organize and fight?  
For the union makes us strong.

It is we who plowed the prairies; built the cities where they trade;  
Dug the mines and built the workshops, endless miles of railroad laid;  
Now we stand outcast and starving midst the wonders we have made;  
But the union makes us strong.

All the world that's owned by idle drones is ours and ours alone.  
We have laid the wide foundations; built it skyward stone by stone.

It is ours, not to slave in, but to master and to own.  
While the union makes us strong.

They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn,  
But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn.  
We can break their haughty power, gain our freedom when we learn  
That the union makes us strong.

In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold,  
Greater than the might of armies, magnified a thousand-fold.  
We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old.  
For the union makes us strong.

# **SPECIAL THANKS**

## **SLU STUDENT UNION**

**Gina Grattan**

Master of Arts in Labor Studies, Co-Chair

**Jamie Johnson**

Master of Arts in Urban Studies, Co-Chair

**Rhonda Joseph**

Master of Arts in Labor Studies, Steering Committee

**Gabriel Feldman-Schwartz**

Master of Arts in Labor Studies, Steering Committee

**Miguel Davila**

Master of Arts in Urban Studies, Treasurer

**Jacob Nardone**

Master of Arts in Labor Studies, Secretary

**N. M. Esa Khan**

Advanced Certificate in Public Administration, Secretary

## **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES ON THE ACADEMIC GOVERNING COUNCIL**

**Tania Caldwell**

Bachelor of Arts In Urban and Community Studies

**Anna Tresvalles**

Bachelor of Arts In Urban and Community Studies

**Miriam Uribe**

Master of Arts in Labor Studies

**Kevin Wilson**

Master of Arts in Labor Studies

# **SPECIAL THANKS**

## **COMMENCEMENT AMBASSADORS**

Lily Wilk

## **COMMENCEMENT MARSHALS**

Hector Agurto  
Dorothy Benson  
Rukiya Brown  
Violet Bube  
Evelyn Castillo  
Shannon Clarke  
Suzette Ellington  
Sara Esfarayeni  
Kate Ferranti  
Grace Flores-Robles  
Michael Gilbert  
Zenzile Greene  
Stephen Greenfeld  
Antoinette Isable-Jones  
Mowmita Jabir  
Cody Kalina  
Maureen LaMar  
Aaron Lenchner  
Zussy Lopez  
Martha Luna  
Cher Mullings  
Katiana Pierre-Jean  
Pablo Perez  
Nadhia Rahman  
Keysha Rodriguez  
Cory Rohr  
Marie Romani  
Walter Romney  
Jonathan Rubin  
Michael Rymer  
Keela Santiago  
Kevin Simmons  
Sheryl Smith  
Yorselin Tovar  
Mejbah Uddin  
Chris Washington  
Sarah Watson  
Anna Zak

# **SPECIAL THANKS**

## **COMMENCEMENT COMMITTEE**

**Rochel Pinder, Co-Chair**

Director of Student and Community Affairs

**Meghan Moore-Wilk, Co-Chair**

Interim Assistant Dean for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff

**Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers**

Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs

**Burton Sacks**

Senior Associate Dean of Operations

**Alethia Jones**

Distinguished Lecturer of Urban Studies

**Nana Ama Ampah**

Administrative Executive Assistant

**Nelly Benavides**

Deputy to Associate Dean

**Xalya Branch**

Marketing and Communication Associate

**Irene Garcia-Mathes**

Senior Academic Advisor

**Laurie Grimes**

Enrollment Registrar Director

**Rose Imperato**

Administrative Specialist

**Laura Meltzer**

Alumni Coordinator

**Padraig O'Donoghue**

Student Services Manager

**Michael Rymer**

Associate Director of the SLU Learning Hub

**Samina Shahidi**

Senior Academic Advisor

**and the SLU staff and faculty, family and friends  
who supported our graduates along the way.**





**CONGRATULATIONS,  
CLASS OF 2024!**

Show off your graduation on social media! Tag us at [#CUNYSLUgrad24](#)