

The 2025 Above & Beyond: Women

Remarkable women leaders improving New York.



Na'ilah Amaru

Advocacy and Policy Strategist, BIPOC Democracy Table

After two decades shaping public policy at every level of government through advocacy and grassroots organizing, Na'ilah Amaru is back in the classroom.

“Empowering everyday people to be active change agents has been the core of my career,” says Amaru, who is pursuing a doctorate at the CUNY Graduate Center, which would be her sixth academic degree. Amaru’s passion for policy began as a tenant organizer in Atlanta, leading to roles as policy adviser to then-Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed and legislative aide to the late Rep. John Lewis.

In New York, her #LetNYVote campaign expanded ballot access, and the #JustPay initiative secured over \$1 billion in wage increases for human services workers. As executive director of the New York City Council’s Black, Latino and Asian Caucus and national director of The Democracy Project, she built coalitions and recruited hundreds of legislators to drive progressive democracy reforms. A U.S. Army veteran, Amaru credits her military experience with instilling discipline and resilience.

Currently, she is a founding member of BIPOC Democracy Table, a coalition advancing the needs of diverse New York communities. Amaru also handles policy, advocacy and government relations at Women Creating Change, formerly the Women’s City Club of New York. There, she developed an intersectional research portfolio to assess policy impacts on diverse women’s identities while advancing racial and gender justice. Now she is moving toward academia.

“I want to teach the next generation of changemakers, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to shape the systems that govern their lives,” Amaru says.

– A.B.