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MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO APPOINTS NEW COMMISSIONERS TO COMMISSION ON GENDER EQUITY

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio today appointed seven new Commissioners and one new Honorary Commissioner to the Commission on Gender Equity. The Commission, launched by Mayor de Blasio on June 24, 2015, is an advisory body that works across City Agencies to help achieve the Mayor’s commitment to reduce gender-based inequity and build a safer, more inclusive and economically mobile city for women and girls. Today’s appointees are a diverse group of leaders, including longtime women’s rights advocates, civil servants, clergy and FDNY’s first female Battalion Chief.

First Lady Chirlane McCray continues to serve as the Honorary Chair of the Commission. Writer, lecturer and feminist leader Gloria Steinem, and City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, who recently launched the Young Women’s Initiative, will continue to serve as Honorary Commissioners along with activist, writer and lecturer Robin Morgan.

“This Commission is working to promote inclusion, so that all New Yorkers – regardless of sex, gender or sexual orientation – have the opportunity to achieve economic mobility and pursue their highest ambitions,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “These newly appointed Commissioners, whose qualifications are backed by years of experience in a variety of fields, will help lead our Commission in creating a safe, fair and equitable city.”

“Today’s appointees helped break many gender barriers, including at the FDNY. They are fighters in the struggle to keep women safe and healthy, improve the lives of families and tap the too-often-overlooked leadership potential of women and girls across New York City. We’re lucky to have them,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. “Outdated gender roles continue to limit New Yorkers and our city. That’s why the Commission has set a lofty goal – the full inclusion of women and girls, economically, socially and politically. I look forward to working with the new Commissioners to achieve it.”

“The Commission on Gender Equity will help pave the way for greater access, opportunity, and success for all New Yorkers, regardless of gender,” said **City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. “Together with the New York City Council’s Young Women’s Initiative, these efforts will continue to break down barriers to education, healthcare, the workplace and civic life. I thank the newly appointed commissioners, including YWI co-Chair Danielle Moss Lee, for their commitment to this crucial goal. I look forward to working with these experts to empower women across our city.”

“These Commissioners will be our voice and ears on gender equity, helping to advise the Mayor and the Administration as we work to create real and sustainable change in New York City,” said **Counsel to the Mayor Maya Wiley**. “We want to make sure women and girls know that we’re here working for them, that we won’t give up, and that we will accept nothing short of creating a world in which women get paid as much as men, in which transgender people feel safe in their jobs and on the street, and in which little girls dreams of becoming firefighters and cops because they know it’s not only possible, it’s become the new normal.”

In the last year, the de Blasio Administration has made great strides towards expanding gender equity by establishing a historic partnership with UN Women, expanding paid sick leave to many of the lowest paid industries that employ disproportionate amounts of women, making unprecedented investments in domestic violence response and education through the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, and appointing and promoting women to leadership positions. Women currently make up fifty-eight percent of the Administration's senior leadership positions.

Among the responsibilities of the newly appointed Commissioners are to:

- Support the Administration's efforts to improve gender equity;
- Make recommendations to improve the lives of New Yorkers across gender, sexual orientation and gender identity;
- Fundraise to support programs and initiatives across the five boroughs;
- Educate the public about gender issues and the Administration's efforts to increase gender equity;
- Collaborate with organizations in the public and private sectors to expand opportunities for women and girls, including LGBTQ women and girls.

"It is one of my greatest honors to be a part of such an esteemed community of pioneers and role models in this critical struggle," said **Jimmie Briggs, Executive Director of the Man Up Campaign**. "This Commission represents an opportunity to carry the necessity of real, universally understood gender equality to all quarters and neighborhoods of the city. If New York can realize a true example of common humanity to be replicated across the United States and the world, then we will have fully realized the vision set forth by Mayor de Blasio."

"I look forward to working on the Commission and with the Mayor to ensure gender equality for all," said **Rochelle (Rocky) Jones, FDNY Former Battalion Chief**. "I hope my 29 years of experience in service to the City of New York will be an asset to the Commission."

"I am deeply honored to be joining our Mayor and this commission as we seek to unpack and dismantle the systemic obstacles to self-actualization facing women and those who are gender-non-conforming in this city," said **Dr. Danielle Moss Lee, CEO of the YWCA of the City of New York**. "We have an amazing opportunity to lead the country and the world in demonstrating how the public, social and private sectors can collaborate to create the kind of community, the kind of city that welcomes and nurtures the potential of everyone. As a native New Yorker, as a woman, as the mother of a young woman, and as the CEO of the YWCA of the City of New York, this is a proud moment indeed."

"A Better Balance is honored to be included in the Mayor's Commission on Gender Equity," said **Sherry Leiwant, co-Founder of A Better Balance**. "We applaud the Mayor for recognizing that there is still much work to be done to insure true equality in New York City and look forward to working together to make that happen."

"I am honored to serve on the Commission on Gender Equity. As President of Planned Parenthood of New York City, I am committed to breaking down barriers that deny New Yorkers access to resources and opportunities because of their gender, identity or sexual orientation," said **Joan Malin, President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of New York City**. "Sexual and reproductive health care plays an integral role in achieving gender equity, and I look forward to working with this distinguished group of leaders to address discrimination and inequity in all its forms to ensure that every New Yorker, no matter who they are, can achieve their potential and fulfill their dreams."

"I am honored to serve on a commission specifically dedicated to the work I have been committed to doing for the past decade – advancing the women and girls of our great city," said **Sonia Ossorio, President of the National Organization for Women of New York City**. "Whether it is ensuring equitable access to reproductive health services, addressing gender-based violence and systemic discrimination of women and girls in our schools, workplaces and institutions, it's clear that we cannot address inequality without making the rights of women and girls a top priority."

"I thank Mayor de Blasio for giving me the opportunity to serve on this vital and valuable Commission," said **Walthene Primus, President of Local 957**. "I look forward to working with First Lady Chirlane McCray and the other Commission members to develop strategies that will help level the playing field in our great city."

"It's an honor to be asked to serve on this important Commission our Mayor has convened," said **Reverend CB Stewart, Minister for Justice Ministries at Greenpoint Church**. "May we advance together the work of making our great city as safe, accessible and open as possible. All New Yorkers deserve dignity, respect and opportunities to thrive. As a faith leader listening to the stories of my community, and as a transgender person myself, I know how often and sadly that is not the case. I'm excited and grateful to be able to engage in this transformative work toward equity and safety for all New Yorkers. May we build together a city where gender diversity is welcomed and celebrated."

About the newly appointed Commissioners:

HONORARY COMMISSIONER:

Jimmie Briggs is founding Executive Director of the Man Up Campaign, and has spent his professional life focusing on the lives and well-being of children, youth, women and girls. Briggs is also a lecturer, advocate and award-winning journalist. His 2005 book on child soldiers and war-affected children, *Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go To War*, took readers into the lives of war-affected children around the world, and highlighted innovative responses for re-integrating them back into society. In 2010, he co-founded the Man Up Campaign, a global initiative activating and supporting youth to stop violence against women and girls through sports, arts and technology. For his work with the Man Up Campaign and violence-affected youth, Briggs was selected as the winner of the 2010 GQ Magazine Better Men Better World Search, as well as one of Women's eNews' 21 Leaders for the 21st Century. Presently, he is consulting with non-profit organizations and lecturing at universities and colleges across the country on trauma, violence, manhood and youth leadership.

COMMISSIONERS:

Rochelle (Rocky) Jones applied to be a part of the Fire Department of New York City in 1977, the first year women were allowed to join the force. Jones passed the written portion of the exam but, like all 170 fellow female applicants, failed the physical exam that year. She then became part of a civil rights action lawsuit that made the assertion that the test was unfair to women, and in 1982 was finally sworn in as a firefighter. Jones became the first female firefighter promoted to lieutenant and captain. In 2003, she was promoted to Battalion Chief, in a ceremony where she was the only woman out of 75 total promotions that year. She is the only woman to date to serve in that rank on the fire side of the FDNY.

Dr. Danielle Moss Lee is CEO of the YWCA of the City of New York, a role she assumed in 2012 after over twenty years of experience in education and human services. She previously served ten years as President of the Harlem Educational Activities Fund and as Assistant Principal of the Grace Lutheran School. Dr. Lee received her B.A. from Swarthmore College where she is a member of the Board of Managers and holds M.A., Ed.M. and Ed.D. degrees from Teachers College at Columbia University where she has served on several committees. She is currently President of Black Agency Executives, a member of the Board of Managers of Swarthmore College, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Human Services Council. Her commentary on social

justice and education has been featured on the Huffington Post, The Daily Beast, City Limits Magazine, and Edutopia in addition to WABC and WNBC.

Sherry Leiwant co-founded A Better Balance in 2005, an organization that promotes equality and expands choices for men and women at all income levels so that they may care for their families without sacrificing their economic security. From 1996 to 2005 Leiwant was a senior staff attorney at NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund running the State Advocacy project, focusing on intersectional issues around women's rights and poverty. She has also been a staff attorney at the Welfare Law center, the Department of Health Education and Welfare, and Assistant US Attorney in the Southern District of New York.

Joan Malin has been the President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of New York City since 2000. A veteran of three New York City mayoral administrations, she has overseen the delivery of home care and protective services for adults, managed the City's senior citizens centers, and worked extensively to address the needs of the City's homeless population. Malin last served the City as Commissioner of Homeless Services.

Sonia Ossorio has served as the President of the National Organization for Women of New York City since 2005, advocating for women's rights by leading campaigns to build women's economic empowerment and close the wage gap, address sexual assault, preserve and protecting women's reproductive rights and end sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the workplace and beyond. She has worked to secure landmark anti-violence legislation to remove the statute of limitations on rape, make human trafficking in crime in New York and strengthen protections for victims of domestic violence. She received an Outstanding Public Service Award from former NY Attorney General Andrew Cuomo.

Walthene Primus has been active in the labor movement for more than three decades. Her career as a civil servant began in 1977 at the New York City Housing Authority. She served the members of Housing Authority Clerical Employees Local 957 for almost 15 years as a shop steward before being elected President, finishing after her fourth term. She later dedicated her time protecting members' rights on the DC 37 Ethical Practices Committee. As the recently appointed Chair of the National Women's Advisory Committee of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Primus has now become a strong advocate for the rights of female workers. She is committed to ensuring that all women not only get respect on the job, but are also trained to become leaders.

Reverend CB Stewart serves as the Minister of Social Justice at the Greenpoint Reformed Church, and as a Chaplain Resident at NYU Lutheran Medical Center. He is passionate about connecting his local church community to broader movements for justice and practicing pastoral care as an act of solidarity. He is a graduate of Union Theological Seminary.

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