

**Celebrating Three of Brooklyn's Best:
Julia Jean-Francois, Alyssa Aguilera, and Cynthia Gordy Giwa
Honored for Their Commitment to Community
at The New York Women's Foundation's 2018 Neighborhood Dinner in Brooklyn**

New York, NY (November 16, 2018) - [The New York Women's Foundation](#) (The Foundation) celebrated the achievements of three exceptional Brooklyn women who have a passion for economic, gender, and racial justice at its "Neighborhood Dinner in Brooklyn" on Thursday, November 15. As leaders and advocates, **Julia Jean-Francois**, LCSW, PhD, Co-Director at Center for Family Life in Sunset Park; **Alyssa Aguilera**, Co-Executive Director of VOCAL-NY; and **Cynthia Gordy Giwa**, Editor-in-Chief and Co-Founder, Black-Owned Brooklyn, exemplify the transformative power of commitment to community.

Ana Oliveira, President and CEO of The Foundation said, "Dr. Julia Jean-Francois, Alyssa Aguilera, and Cynthia Gordy Giwa are three of Brooklyn's most accomplished women who devote their lives and work to improving community. Through their work, they give voice and visibility to people who might otherwise be overlooked. We thank them for their leadership, and for making their home borough a better place for women and their families."

Dr. Julia Jean-Francois received the Neighborhood Leadership Award for her skillful co-direction of the [Center for Family Life in Sunset Park](#), a neighborhood settlement house that provides integrated human services to a low-income immigrant community, including family counseling, foster care programs, a community resource center, employment services and cooperative business development programs.

Alyssa Aguilera was honored with the Neighborhood Leadership Award for her work in expanding [VOCAL-NY's](#) programs for low-income people affected by HIV/AIDS, drug use, homelessness, and mass incarceration, including tripling harm reduction services for drug users in Brooklyn. She also leads campaigns to end discriminatory and unjust policing and courtroom practices, create alternatives to the drug war, and address the collateral consequences of mass incarceration.

The Spirit of Entrepreneurship Award was presented to **Cynthia Gordy Giwa**. [Black-Owned Brooklyn](#), Ms. Giwa's website and blog, promotes Black-owned, Brooklyn-based ventures, spotlighting some of the best in local food and drink, home and design, style, wellness and culture, and their owners who are propelling a renaissance of the Black business community.

More than 250 people attended the dinner held in the Lepercq Space at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, including New York City Council Majority Leader **Laurie Cumbo** who gave opening remarks. Among the highlights was the auction of artwork by [Groundswell](#) artist **Micaela Anaya**. Bidders had the opportunity to see the creative process in action as Ms. Anaya completed her painting during the cocktail reception.

In 1994, The New York Women’s Foundation inaugurated the Neighborhood Dinner to celebrate New York City’s diverse cultures and the courageous leaders working to make their communities a better place for all, borough by borough. The Spirit of Entrepreneurship Award is presented to a woman whose presence enriches the community and demonstrates a deep level of commitment to her home base. The Neighborhood Leadership Award honors the power of women acting in and for their communities.

To view and/or download photos from The New York Women’s Foundation’s 2018 Brooklyn Neighborhood Dinner, visit [here](#). Photos are to be credited to Hannah Schillinger.

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[About The New York Women’s Foundation](#)

Since 1987, The New York Women’s Foundation has advanced a dynamic philanthropic strategy based on the fundamental reality that, when women thrive, their families and communities also thrive. The Foundation’s grantmaking places it at the top of public women’s foundations in the United States, and in the top two in the world. We invest in women-led, community-based solutions that promote the economic security, safety, and health of the most vulnerable women in New York City. We foster women’s leadership, create partnerships that spark catalytic change, exchange insights with experts across sectors, and empower women by training them in activism and philanthropy to accelerate and sustain forward progress. Visit <http://www.nywf.org> to learn more about our work to transform lives, families, and communities – and create a better New York City for all.

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