

## Slate of Candidates for UNA-USA Board of Directors, Annual Meeting May 2025

### Nominees running for re-election to two-year terms (2025-2027)



#### **Demetrios Mihailidis (1st Vice President)**

Demetrios Mihailidis, known as Mr. M, is currently serving as First Vice-President for UNA-Westchester and is also working with the World Federation for United Nations Associations (WFUNA). Mr. M is a retired educator who taught in the Bronx, Mount Vernon, and as an Adjunct Instructor for the SUPA Program at Syracuse University, NY. As an educator, he considers his main accomplishments: 1) Establishing the United Nations Club at Mount Vernon High School 32 years ago that inspired the interest of many students in global affairs; 2) Being recognized by various organizations for his efforts in human rights and teaching.

Mr. M has been recognized and honored by the US House of Representatives, the NY State Assembly, Westchester County and the City of Mount Vernon, NY. He received the Champion of Human Rights Award from the Westchester Human Rights Commission, the Spirit of Achievement and the Lifetime Service Awards from Junior Achievement, the UNA-USA Westchester Honors Global Award, the High School Teacher of the Year Award from Mount Vernon, and the W.H. Dougharty Hofstra University Commitment Award. He has published works for NYU and the Africa Report Magazine and has been acknowledged in other publications for his research contributions. He has traveled extensively and, under the auspices of UNESCO, was involved in projects in West Africa and South Korea. His parents were Greek immigrants from Asia Minor, and he grew up in Washington Heights, NYC. He graduated from New York University with a B.A. and M.A. in History. His future endeavors are to continue his work in the field of human rights, and to travel, learn and most importantly spend time with his family.

#### **Raina Kadavil (Communications Chair)**



Raina currently serves as UNA-Westchester's Communications Committee Chair and has been leading (as Secretary-General) the EKIN Southern NY State Middle & High School Model United Nations Conference in March 2025 in NYC and in May in Izmir, Turkey. She was voted by UNA-USA as the Youth Leader of the Year in 2024.

Raina is a dedicated lover of service work, writing and travel. She is a Marketing Analyst at Mastercard and is an MBA graduate of Johns Hopkins University in International Relations. She is the Philanthropy Chair of the Women's Leadership Network at Mastercard and the Chief Executive Officer of Urban Refuge, a nonprofit that breaks geographic and linguistic barriers by mapping aid for refugees and immigrants living in large cities. She is the author of a novel called "The Voice of Thunder"

and is compiling her second book, an anthology called "Ignite Your Story."

Raina has a long history of philanthropy work, leading her first community organization, Global Ambassadors, at the age of ten and engaging young people with the Sustainable Development Goals. She founded the Boston University chapter of UNA-USA and led BU's first professional foreign affairs journal as Editor-in-Chief. She also has an extensive research background, having conducted an award-winning independent study on the impact of climate change on horseshoe crab migration and aided in the research fueling Urban Refuge. She has spoken about her work and experiences across the United States, in Beijing, and at the United Nations General Assembly Hall. Raina has been recognized for her work by the Coca-Cola Foundation, Zonta International, the Walt Disney Company and Claes Nobel.

## New Nominees running for two-year terms (2025-2027)



### **Nicole Benjamin**

Nicole Benjamin is an experienced advocate and leader with a strong background in government relations, strategic planning, community engagement, non-profit management, social services, and legal services. She is currently the Assistant Executive Director of Quality Improvement and Compliance at The Arc Westchester, where she oversees departments like Advocacy, Compliance, and Staff Development. In this role, Nicole leads legislative panels, helps organize strategic planning efforts, and ensures that the organization follows state and federal regulations.

Alongside her work at The Arc Westchester, Nicole manages social service contracts for the Westchester County Department of Social Services, focusing on contract compliance, quality assurance, and customer service. As a New York State Certified Court Evaluator and Guardian, she provides expert testimony in guardianship cases in New York State's Supreme Courts, offering key insights into legal and social service matters.

Nicole has also held important roles in government, including serving as a Legislative Aide for the City of Yonkers, where she drafted legislation and conducted legal research. She also worked with the New York City Department of Health on an Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program, helping individuals with mental health issues access the treatment and services they need.

Nicole holds a JD and LLM from Touro School of Law, a Master of Social Work from Fordham University, and a BA in Sociology from Yale University. She is actively involved in several civic organizations, including the Westchester Women's Agenda, and is dedicated to advocating for vulnerable populations and making systemic change.

### **Andy D. Laub**

Andy D. Laub is an experienced professional in international affairs, diplomacy, and political campaign management. He has worked in government and nonprofit sectors, focusing on policy analysis, strategic planning, and communication across cultures.



Currently, Andy works as a Senior Clerk at the Westchester County Board of Elections, where he helps maintain election integrity through voter registration and administrative tasks. Before that, he was the Director of Constituent Services for the New York State Senate, handling casework and community outreach.

Andy has also worked in political campaigns, serving as Field Director for congressional candidates and Campaign Manager for Greenburgh Town Supervisor Paul Feiner. In these roles, he led volunteer coordination, voter outreach, and fundraising efforts.

In addition, Andy has experience in international relations as a fellow at the American Center for Strategic and International Affairs, where he helped with diplomatic initiatives. He has also worked as a consultant for the IDEOS Institute, supporting leadership development and research on global challenges.

Earlier in his career, Andy worked in nonprofit organizations and advocacy groups, developing policies and outreach programs. He has expertise in diplomacy, research, crisis management, and public relations.

Andy is committed to fostering collaboration and leadership. With his strong analytical skills and deep understanding of politics and global issues, he continuously impacts governance, policy, and international relations.

### **Carrie-Michele Shivers**



Carrie-Michele Shivers, affectionately known as Michele, is an educator, advocate and community leader with two decades of experience advancing equity through education, civic engagement, and global awareness. Michele has served as a first-grade teacher, education consultant, and literacy specialist across Westchester County and New York City. She has worked with a diverse range of students, including those with special needs, focusing on cultural inclusivity and personalized instruction. Through her consulting business, CM Shivers Educational & Training, she has organized professional development training, workshops, and leadership seminars for teachers and school administrators.

Michele has recently earned a Post-Master's Advanced Certificate in Literacy from Lehman College (2025). She also holds a Master of Science in Elementary Education from Fordham University, a Bachelor of Science in Behavioral Science from Iona University, and certifications in New York State Elementary Education and Literacy.

Michele currently serves on the Board of the League of Women Voters of Rye, Rye Brook and Port Chester, contributing to projects at the County, State and National Levels. She is also a moderator for civic forums, a member of many local civic organizations and contributed to many local mayoral campaigns.

Known for her deep-rooted commitment to community empowerment, Michele brings a collaborative spirit and strategic insight to her role on the UNA-USA Westchester Board.

## **New Nominees running for one-year terms (2025-2026)**



### **Mezaun Arnone**

Mezaun Arnone has been teaching STEM and STEAM to 3rd to 8th graders at Our Lady of Victory School in Mt. Vernon since 2019. She also teaches classical music appreciation and instruments as well as art, artists, painting and sculpture to elementary school students. She assists with Science Club, Photography Club, and the afterschool Art Club, and is Moderator for the Student Council (6th to 8th grades).

For the last year, Mezaun has taught Art Therapy to Veterans with PTSD and to Senior Citizens. Earlier she worked as a volunteer to help residents at the Westchester Rehabilitation Center in Mount Vernon with painting on canvas and other activities. From 2005 to 2008, she worked at two local bank branches as a customer service officer, including handling stock portfolios. Earlier she was CEO and Founder of Signs Artists Management in Mount Vernon, where she was teaching, coaching and managing art and music programs, managing concerts and festivals, including publicity and promotions.

Mezaun has an M.S. and a B.A from the University of Arizona. She has a certification in teaching English as a second language and as a Therapeutic Art Coach. She also has a Paralegal/Business school degree from Mercy College. Finally, she has founded a non-profit that teaches arts to children in Africa via Zoom.

### **Alison Christmas**

Alison Christmas is an experienced administrative professional with over 8 years of experience supporting teams and executives in busy environments. She currently works as the Clinical Placement Coordinator at Mercy University's School of Nursing, where she handles clinical placements for nursing students and faculty. Alison ensures smooth scheduling, keeps detailed records, and makes sure everything meets clinical guidelines, achieving a 100% on-time placement completion rate.

Before this, Alison worked as a Clinical Administrative Assistant at Mercy University, where she helped clinical coordinators, organized job fairs for graduating students, and handled student credentialing for clinical rotations. She also worked at Columbia University Medical Center, first as an Administrative Coordinator, managing the accreditation process for the Department of Orthopaedics and overseeing J-1 VISA sponsorships for international visitors. Later, she became an Administrative Practice Coordinator, supporting operations, academic activities, and conferences for physician offices.



Alison holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a focus on Marketing from Mercy University. She is an active member of the Mercy Alumni Council and the Westchester Community College Alumni Council and also mentors a high school student through the iMentor NYC program. Alison is skilled in using various administrative tools, such as Microsoft Office Suite, Adobe Pro, and CRM systems. She is highly skilled in organization, project coordination, and problem-solving.

### **Connie Jones-Hairston**



Connie Jones-Hairston is an experienced social worker and youth program director based in Yonkers, NY, with over 20 years of service in the field. She is currently the Youth Court Program Director, Supervisor, and Social Worker at the White Plains Youth Bureau, where she manages the Juvenile Diversion Program. Connie trains youth court officers, provides case management, and coordinates community service sanctions for young offenders. She also supervises social work interns, offering guidance, and provides substance abuse prevention and brief therapy using techniques like CBT, DBT, and Motivational Interviewing.

Connie has a strong background in education, having worked as a Field Placement Coordinator and Adjunct Faculty at Fordham University, where she guided MSW students through their placements and trained field placement instructors.

In addition to her social work and teaching roles, Connie has worked with the U.S. Department of Justice since 2000 in various roles, including Paralegal/EEO Investigator and Financial Litigation Agent. She has earned several awards for her outstanding service.

Connie holds a Master of Social Work (Clinical), a Master of Public Administration, and a CASAC-T certification. She is an active member of several professional organizations and is committed to community service, always advocating for the well-being and development of youth.



### **José Nuñez**

José Nuñez holds a B.S. in International Affairs and Economics from Skidmore College and is currently gaining further expertise with certifications in Financial Modeling and SQL for Data Analysis. As a Leadership Resident at Yonkers Partners in Education, he played a key role in launching programs like the Alumni Network and Family Corps. In this role, José managed timelines, communicated with stakeholders, and used CRM tools to improve engagement and help the programs grow. Previously, as a College Readiness Manager, he built partnerships across education, business, and community sectors, ensuring projects were delivered on time and within budget. He used data analysis to improve program results and performance.

In addition to his professional experience, José served as a Teaching Assistant in Economics at

Skidmore College, where he helped faculty with organizing lectures, preparing exams, grading, and providing study materials for students. His technical skills include proficiency in data analysis, financial modeling, cost analysis, and revenue forecasting, using tools such as Microsoft Excel, SQL, Stata, and R Studio. He also has experience in project management, stakeholder communication, market analysis, regulatory compliance, and utility pricing.

Fluent in both English and Spanish, José focuses on using data to improve strategic planning, aiming to make organizations more efficient and effective. His solid background in economics and data analysis allows him to play a crucial role in driving innovation and growth across various sectors.