

# M/WBE MENTORS



**NYC**  
Small Business  
Services

careers  
businesses  
neighborhoods

NEW YORK CITY  
**m/wbe**  
Minority and Woman-Owned Business Enterprises



# About our M/WBE Mentors

Our M/WBE Mentors are NYC-certified Minority-and/or Woman-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) who have been successfully contracting with NYC agencies and other NYC public sector entities for the past several years. They represent several industry sectors within Construction, Goods and Services.

Their experience and expertise in selling to government puts them in a rare position to share their knowledge with M/WBEs looking to similarly succeed. These entrepreneurs volunteer their time to pass along lessons, tips and tricks they've learned over the course of their entrepreneurial journeys, in the hopes that other M/WBEs who attend these program events will then have a less-challenging and successful journey of their own.

**[nyc.gov/mwbementors](https://nyc.gov/mwbementors)**

# Our M/WBE Mentors

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## **Rolando Acosta**

President & CEO

**JAG Companies Inc.**

Rolando E. Acosta, Esq. (Roly) is the second-generation President and CEO of JAG Companies, Inc., the parent company of construction industry firms Northeast Remsco Construction, Caldwell Marine International, and Huxted Trenchless. Family owned and operated for nearly forty-five years, the companies have over 375 employees and are licensed to do business in 15 states. The companies are ranked annually in the top fifty largest Hispanic-owned companies in the United States.

Roly grew up in a construction family and throughout his career has held the positions of Superintendent, Project Manager, Legal Counsel, and Executive Vice President.

Roly works side-by-side with trades people and managers leading by example and exemplifying the company's core values of REPUTATION—WORK ETHIC—TEAM ACOMPLISHMENT. He supports the construction industry as a board member of the UTCA, ACCNJ, and GCA of

NYC. He gives back to the community as a board member of the Community Medical Center Foundation, the NJIT HLLC, and the Princeton Football Alumni Association.

He enjoys bodysurfing, birding, hunting, and golf. Roly greatly enjoys supporting his children Alexis on the lake, Austin on the diamond, and Kaiella in the gym. Most of all, Roly enjoys growing old with his one-and-only Tricia.

Roly earned his undergraduate degree from Princeton University and his law degree from Rutgers University School of Law-Newark.





## **Penda Aiken**

President & CEO

**Penda Aiken Inc.**

Penda Aiken brings more than 30 years of experience leading client-focused workforce solution projects, compliance, project management, and staff augmentation teams. As President and CEO of Penda Aiken Inc., she is responsible for establishing and maintaining the quality of staffing, compliance, monitoring, and reporting services delivered to clients. Through her leadership, PAI has successfully completed more than 25,000 engagements in a wide range of disciplines. Aiken is a respected local business owner, where she is well known for her leadership and expertise as a trained staffing, compliance, and workforce professional.

Known as a problem solver and strategic planner, Aiken serves as Director, Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce; Committee Chair: Workforce Development; Director, Court - Livingston – Schermerhorn Business Improvement District; Director, Brooklyn Neighborhood Improvement Association; Board Director for the National Association of

Minority Contractors (NAMC) New York Tri-State Chapter; Board Director of Empire State Bank; and Board Chair, Teach to Excel Foundation. In addition to her work with various community boards, Aiken also conducts numerous philanthropic endeavors. She holds a B.A. from the CUNY Baccalaureate Program and an MFA from Columbia University.



## **Hugo E. Almeida, Jr.**

CEO

**Abitronix, LLC**

Hugo E. Almeida, Jr. has more than 28 years experience in the Global Information Communications & Technology sectors. His specialization & expertise has been in International Business with a strong focus on servicing the Latin American Markets. In 2003, he took on the role of President and later Chief Executive Officer for Abitronix, LLC where he continues to lead his team with great Leadership, Vision, Passion & Direction. His latest venture to date is the production of T20E World Podcast (The 2020 Entrepreneur World) as he shares his knowledge and experiences as we learn to adjust in the "New Norm" of doing business!

Prior to Abitronix, Hugo held very successful Sales Management roles for Matsushita (Panasonic), Lucent Technologies and at Avaya Inc. He currently sits on the Board of Directors for Juventud Ecuatoriana, has served on the Board as Treasurer for the Morris County Hispanic-American Chamber, a member with the United States Hispanic Chamber & several different tech organizations.

He prides himself on mentoring young entrepreneurs and students and continues to sit on the Judging Panel of Directors for the Annual Scholarship Applicants for Juventud Ecuatoriana based in NY.

Hugo continues to be a guest speaker at many International Round Table meetings, has presented "Latin America Business and Markets" to Matsushita in Osaka, Japan, at the 10th Anniversary of "Lideres a Lideres" in Quito, Ecuador and throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Hugo's understanding of how global enterprises operate outside of the United States, how business transactions are done, how export companies work, customs knowledge in Latin America, payments, logistics, and fluctuating economies have made him a true expert in these fields. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Industrial Technology from Kean University.



## Denise Arboleda

Vice President of Sales

**Compulink Technologies Inc.**

Denise Arboleda has a successful history of providing IT services and solutions to the government, education and non-profit sectors for more than 25 years as VP of Sales at family-owned Compulink Technologies Inc., an MBE IT firm based in New York City. Denise is multifaceted, has a strong background in sales, business operations, financials and the essentials of what it means to do business as an M/WBE in New York. Denise has a notable reputation for acting as a reliable liaison for New York's government agencies, aiding in the building of robust manufacturing relationships and excellent customer delivery. She has been known for providing expert industry advice and repeatedly delivering successful IT projects and solutions.

During her career Denise has been recognized for her dedication and service to the New York government through a multitude of awards and certificates. As a woman in the IT industry, Denise has empowered herself

to always think big, accomplish her goals, and never give up on opportunities. Denise looks forward to empowering more women and sharing her experiences over the years.

**Fun Fact:** Denise is pentalingual and fluent in all five languages.



## **Barbara Armand Kushner**

President  
**Armand Corporation**

Barbara Armand Kushner is the President and Owner of Armand Corporation. Ms. Kushner started the firm in 1991. The firm's markets include transportation, housing, educational facilities, and disaster recovery. Services offered include program management and construction management including operations, budgeting, reporting, supervision, scheduling, and cost estimating. Some of the firm's notable Clients include the NJ Schools Development Authority, the NYC Housing Authority, the NY Governor's Office of Storm Recovery, the NJ Department of Transportation, the Hudson River Park Trust, the Philadelphia School District, and PA Dept. of General Services. Armand Corporation's reputation for excellent quality, professionalism, and client satisfaction have sustained its 29-year growth. The firm has won many awards and continues to expand in NY, NJ, PA, FL, and the USVI.

Ms. Kushner is President Emeritus of the national chapter of Professional Women in Construction; holds an Honorary Doctorate in Engineering from Rowan University (NJ); and a B.A. in Mathematics and Natural Science (Specialization: Physics) from Thomas Edison State University, NJ. She resides in Manhattan with husband, Neil Kushner.





## **Nisha Balwani**

CEO

**RCI Technologies**

Nisha Balwani is the second-generation CEO of RCI Technologies, an M/WBE information technology firm focused on building and modernizing digital systems while minimizing security risk. RCI unites people, process, and technology to create high-value technical solutions for federal, state, and local government entities. RCI was founded by Anisa and Raj Balwani over four decades ago, and has advanced into an award-winning, highly respected firm within both the public and private sectors.

Nisha was recently featured in Forbes for her leadership of RCI through its generational succession. She entered the CEO role in January 2021 and is especially proud to continue RCI's woman-owned and led legacy as she leads the company into the next generation of growth. Under her leadership, RCI has already tripled its business with New York City agencies and expanded its cyber security capabilities.

Prior to this role, Nisha graduated from Columbia Business School with an MBA in technology and entrepreneurship, led Business Development at RCI, and founded RENTALYA, the first US-based brand to provide South Asian formalwear as a rental service. She sat on the board of the NJBPU SDDC Supplier Diversity Development Council and was Chief of Staff to the US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce Northeast President. She also completed the NYC Dept of Small Business Services' Strategic Steps for Growth program with the NYU Stern School of Business.

Nisha currently lives in Brooklyn with her husband and (too) many plants. In her free time, you can find her on her yoga mat, with her nose in a book, or exploring a new coffee shop.



## **Deborah Bradley**

Founder and President

**Deborah Bradley**  
**Construction &**  
**Management Services Inc.**

Deborah Bradley founded Deborah Bradley Construction & Management Services Inc. (DBC) over 27 years ago. DBC is a full-service General Contractor and Construction Management consultant to institutional and educational facilities and to state and city public agencies, authorities and trusts throughout New York State. Today, DBC continues to be a 100% woman-owned and operated business enterprise and union contractor.

DBC's General Contracting Division specializes in site/civil construction, interior building renovations and electrical work. The firm self-performs a majority of its work and is a licensed Electrical Contractor in NYC. DBC works within sectors including transportation, corrections, education, healthcare, utilities, energy, parks, streetscapes, and green spaces. DBC's Construction Management division provides construction management services including project supervision and management, field supervision, project engineering, quality assurance and quality control reviews and code compliance, document control, LEED compliance tracking and documentation, and site safety management and supervision.

Long-time clients: the NYC School Construction Authority (SCA), DASNY, MTA, Hudson River Park Trust, Con Edison, NYC Economic Development Corporation, Battery Park City Authority, CUNY, Columbia University, NYC Dept of Correction, and NYC Dept of Parks & Recreation among others. Despite the firm's extensive growth in recent years, Deborah is hands-on in all aspects of the company's performance. Her early experience as a CPA with Deloitte & Touche and her MBA from Columbia University serve her well as she guides the firm she founded.

Former President of the Women Builders Council Inc., Ms. Bradley currently serves on its Executive Board. She also serves on the Executive Board of Women Construction Owners & Executives (WCOE) and is involved in the Regional Alliance of Small Contractors and the NYC Building Congress, the NYC SCA, the NYC Dept of Design & Construction (DDC) Diversity Boards, and the NYC Office of the Mayor's M/WBE Advisory Board. As a business owner and mother of three, Deborah is committed to teaching and mentoring young women entering the construction industry as well as helping other small M/WBE firms grow and prosper.



## Jennifer Carpenter

Principal

**Verona Carpenter**  
**Architects**

Jennifer Carpenter, RA, AIA, LEED AP is a principal of Verona Carpenter Architects and has practiced in New York since 1998. She and partner Irina Verona are focused on building spaces that expand inclusion by creating environments that embrace neurodiversity.

Jennifer has deep experience across many project types, including workplace and education. Recent projects include the Calhoun School renovation, the New York offices for Adidas, global headquarters and offices around the world for MediaMath, and a winning competition entry for a K-12 school at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Before launching Verona Carpenter, Jennifer was the principal of Jennifer Carpenter Architect. In 2000, Jennifer co-founded the innovative furniture and product design studio TRUCK Product Architecture; she designed furniture for retailers including the MoMA Design Store and Design Within Reach. She is featured in design anthologies including Dish, a compendium of women in design from Princeton Architectural Press, and the book

...& Fork, a global survey of 'the most exciting and important' young designers from Phaidon Press.

Before earning her Master of Architecture from Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation Jennifer worked with Cesar Pelli + Associates. She graduated summa cum laude with a BA from Yale, where she studied architecture and art history. She has been a LEED Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Accredited Professional since 2010.

Jennifer is currently in her sixth year on the Board of Directors of the Quad Preparatory School, serving gifted special-needs students, and was a founding member of the Museum of Food and Drink. She is a member of the American Institute of Architects, where she sits on the NYC Social Sciences and Architecture committee. She lives in Manhattan with her husband, two sons, and two dogs.





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**K.Y. Chow**

President  
**GM Printing**

K.Y. Chow started his career in investment finances as a merchant banker for loan syndication in Hong Kong. After more than a decade of success in that sector, he moved to New York City and worked in management at technology and financial firms before starting his company, Grand Meridian Printing, in 1993. His extensive experience in business analysis and strategic planning, product and project management, business development and customer service provided a strong foundation for him to grow his company. That growth required him to move his operation from its initial Manhattan Chinatown 850 sq. ft. location, that started out specializing in takeout menus, to a larger, 18,000 sq. ft. facility in Long Island City producing high-quality, custom and high-volume print jobs. Now GM Printing is located in a 35,000 sq. ft. operation in Maspeth.

Mr. Chow's 28-year-old company and its continued growth are representative of his business acumen, stamina, and innovation in an industry that has gradually become smaller and seemingly more finite. GM Printing is proud to include public, private, and non-profit sector organizations among its clients, including City University of NY (CUNY), The Asian Culture and Media Group of SinoVision, the American Museum of Natural History, Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), NYC Transit, NYC Department of Buildings (DOB), NYC Council, and the Lower Manhattan Development Corp (LMDC), among many other distinguished organizations.

As a first-generation Chinese immigrant pursuing his American dream, Mr. Chow has been asked to speak about his entrepreneurial experiences and success by many community and commercial organizations, and he and his company have been nominated for and have won several awards and accolades for their contributions to NYC's commercial universe. Mr. Chow has taught entrepreneurs and small business owners at Renaissance Economic Development Corporation's entrepreneurship program and at other government agencies. He had also served as a part-time lecturer at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, investment courses for Institute of Bankers, UK, and Small Business Management of Hong Kong Baptist University.

In addition to running GM Printing, Mr. Chow also serves as a board member of the Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation and of the Queens Chamber of Commerce. He holds a BA from Hong Kong Baptist University, an MBA from Asian Institute of Management in the Philippines, and a certificate from the Kellogg School of Management's Advanced Management Executive Program.



## Thomas Egwabor

President

[All South Shore Medical Supply](#)

In 2002, Thomas Egwabor came to the United States from Nigeria in pursuit of a career in fashion. Unfortunately, 9/11 had significantly impacted the industry, and he needed to explore other options.

A referral to a doctor who needed help sourcing medical supplies from China opened another door. Thomas mastered navigating the new import rules that came about after 9/11. More referrals followed, and a new career was born.

In 2011, Thomas formally started a durable medical supply and equipment company, All South Shore Medical Supply, serving public and private medical groups and health insurance companies. Nassau County and the NYS Department of Corrections became customers.

When COVID-19 struck, Thomas came upon the opportunity of providing medical supplies to New York City. He found out about the City's commitment to doing business with NYC-certified Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) and applied for M/WBE certification.

Since then, the company has won contracts from the NYC Department of Health, the Fire Department, the Police Department, and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.



## **Ernst Fleuranvil, P.E.**

CEO

**Excelsior Engineering  
Services P.C.**

Ernst Fleuranvil, P.E. is a professional engineer and founder and CEO of Excelsior Engineering Services P.C., a company that specializes in private and government engineering service, including complete professional engineering services offering a portfolio of highway design, structural engineering, transportation planning, construction management, site engineering, and surveying.

Mr. Fleuranvil is the president of the Association des Ingénieurs Haïtiens et Américains (ADIHA) - the Association of Haitian and American Engineers. ADIHA is well known for serving the community through mentoring youths, offering scholarships, and promoting STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) among children and youths.

Mr. Fleuranvil graduated from the New York City College with a bachelor's degree of engineering in civil

engineering, and with a master's degree from NJIT in Civil Engineering.

One thing that has been the motivation in Mr. Fleuranvil's life is selfless contribution and doing the right thing to promote the success of others with no expectation or desire for personal recognition. Throughout his life, Mr. Fleuranvil has tried to be a mentor anywhere he has had the chance to serve.





## **Micoy Hamilton**

CEO

**Nifty Concept Inc.**

Micoy Hamilton is the founder, CEO, and owner of Nifty Concept Inc., a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) providing medical equipment, office, and janitorial supplies.

Soon after obtaining his degree in Aeronautics Technology, Mr. Hamilton worked as a volunteer in nursing homes, where he saw a need to provide durable medical equipment. Shortly thereafter, he started his business, Nifty Concept Inc. Initially, he concentrated on providing specific types of equipment, but later decided to scale his business differently to satisfy the market need, and to be able to sell more products.

Mr. Hamilton won large contracts with the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), Department of Emergency Management (DEM), NYC Fire Department (FDNY), and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to provide medical and janitorial supplies.

Mr. Hamilton's tips for winning contracts with the City are to network, to create relationships, and to keep trying. Also, he states that he is always honest with the agencies' procurement officers and believes in developing relationships based on trust.



## **Nasser Jabber**

Founder

**Jabber Dorado Enterprises**

Originally from Ramallah, Nasser Jabber came to the United States as a university student in economics and finance. Working in restaurants to pay for his degree, Nasser soon found that his true passion was food, and that his talents would take him from waiting tables to training under the best chefs in New York City. In 2015, Nasser opened the critically acclaimed Palestinian-South American fusion restaurant, Mazeish, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

Inspired by the entrepreneurial spirit and diverse stories of America's immigrant communities, he decided to use the restaurant as a space for chefs to try new concepts, celebrate their heritage, or host dinners to address social issues. It was this concept that gave rise to Nasser's acclaimed project, Displaced Kitchens, and the founding of Jabber Dorado Enterprises (JDE), a social impact food logistics company featuring The Migrant Kitchen restaurant brand. Nasser uses this platform to help people connect, taste exciting new foods, and meet the passionate chefs behind their meals.

As a M/WBE certified business, JDE has delivered 3.5 million meals to food insecure families by purchasing, hiring, and delivering culturally appropriate food to communities all over NYC. JDE has also worked along José Andrés' World Central Kitchen in NYC and Lebanon. They have independently provided food relief in other international hot zones as well.

Nasser is also dedicated to social impact through culinary diplomacy by sharing the values of entrepreneurship, private enterprise, and food security to the world. Since 2012, he has worked with the U.S. State Department in several countries, namely Turkey, Sweden, and Morocco. There, he has worked to provide solutions to the refugee crisis through food, hospitality, food relief, industry employment, and sustainable farming.



## **Ericka Keller**

Chairperson/CEO

**Brisa Builders Corp.**

Managing Member

**Brisa Builders Development,**  
**Brisa Development, Brisa**  
**Ventures LLC**

Ericka Keller truly has a heart for community development and revitalization. Attending school on academic scholarships, Ericka earned her Bachelor of Arts, Master of Science, and Professional Certification degrees from New York University, Brooklyn College, and the College of St. Rose, respectively. Ericka commenced her career as a junior high school teacher and served 10 years as NYC Department of Education Principal before taking over the family business of construction and development in 2012.

Ericka built upon Brisa Builders Corp.'s history as a HUD 202 General Contractor building senior housing for faith-based sponsors, and in 2016 opened her own company Brisa Builders Development LLC, an organization focused on the development of affordable housing with faith-based organizations and church partners. Since 2016, Brisa Builders Development LLC has currently completed more than 660 units of affordable housing with more than 108,575 sq. ft. of commercial/retail and community facility spaces, many with faith-based partners. The company currently has more than 700 units in predevelopment in NYC including 233 units as the selected developer for the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Brownsville RFP - Site B in 2018. In 2019, she partnered with a colleague to expand the business

outside of the NYC metro area by forming Brisa Development LLC. Brisa was the winner of the City of Chicopee, Baskin Site in 2020 and the 24-acre Carriage Grove site in Western Massachusetts in 2021, as well as purchaser of properties in Rhode Island and Maine.

Ericka has received several awards and citations during the course of both of her careers including, the 2009 Queens Rotary Club "Unsung Hero Award", 2010 NYS Senate "Constituent of the Month Citation", 2012 National Association of Professional Women (NAPW) "Woman of the Year Award", the 2015 Mayor Hall - Village of Hempstead "Woman of the Year Award", as well as recognitions from recent colleagues like the New York State Association of Affordable Housing (NYSAAH) 2021 M/WBE of the Year and 2021 Crain's Notable Business Woman Recognition.

Ericka continues to be focused on supporting other minority and women-owned businesses much like her father did many years ago, and she also provides an annual scholarship to young men from Brooklyn pursuing college with an entrepreneurial spirit in honor of her late father, Thomas B. Keller.





## **Yasmeen Latif**

President

**SH5 Construction**

Yasmeen Latif, a successful minority woman business owner of SH5 Construction, emigrated from Sialkot, Pakistan, to the United States when she was 17 years old to join her father, Mohammed Latif, who was working in NYC as a contractor. In 2004, Ms. Latif and her father founded their own general contracting company. Currently, Ms. Latif is the president & 100% owner of the business.

Ms. Latif has an extraordinary passion about the construction business, and she has always worked with enormous devotion and energy towards growing her family business. Her knowledge and solid experience in the construction industry make SH5 a top-notch minority woman-owned construction company in NYC. Ms. Latif is one of very few women in the construction industry who has financially raised her business from practically “zero” to a multi-million-dollar company. She graduated from the NYCCT with a degree in Construction Management.

SH5 keeps growing and diversifying divisions of the company. Now, Ms. Latif is expanding to be a material supplier in the tri-state area. SH5 is a certified MWBE/DBE/SBE, specializing in civil/site/roofing work, and bonded to \$25 million aggregate.

Ms. Latif has been nominated to receive several awards in recognition of her services in the construction industry, including:

- MTA Success Stories (2015-2018)
- BOC Capital/NYCEDC - Entrepreneur of the Year award (2019)
- Family-Owned Business of the Year award from the SBA (2020)
- Competitive Edge Conference - DBE of the Year award (2021)
- Women of Distinction - Assemblyman William Colton's office (2022)

Ms. Latif believes in supporting equality in humanity, and she donates to many organizations, such as UNICEF, American Red Cross, & NewYork-Presbyterian.



## **Samuel Padilla, P.E.**

Founder and President

**Padilla Construction  
Services Inc.**

Samuel Padilla began his career at American Electric Power in 1974. There he advanced from an entry-level engineering position to Structural Engineering Manager responsible for all structural components of its fossil, nuclear, and hydroelectric power plants. In 1983, he was recruited by Consolidated Edison. There he advanced from a Principal Engineering position to becoming the Manhattan Construction Division Manager.

In 1993, Samuel founded Padilla Construction Services as a full-service Minority-owned Business Enterprise in the Engineering and Construction Consulting field. This decision was greatly influenced by the Affirmative Action initiatives of the Honorable David Dinkins Administration.

In 2006, Padilla Construction Services Inc. moved its headquarters from Staten Island to Westbury, NY. With more than \$5 million of construction equipment, a bonding capacity of \$150 million, and a team of dedicated professionals, Padilla's average annual revenues has grown to \$50 million.

Over the past 28 years, Padilla Construction Services Inc. has developed into one of New York's largest Minority Prime General Contractors. It employs a management staff of Professional Engineers, Project Managers, Superintendents, and more than 250 full-time experienced union field personnel. Padilla has wide-ranging capabilities that include piped underground utilities, concrete work, stonework, masonry, steel work, park work, interior work, as well as Utility Engineering Consulting Services.

Samuel received his Bachelor's in civil engineering from the City College School of Engineering. He obtained a civil engineering Master's from the Polytechnic Institute of New York in 1977, and his New York State Professional Engineer's License in 1979.

He is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and serves in advisory capacities on the NYC School Construction Authority Diversity Board, the NYC Department of Design and Construction Advisory Board, Mayor de Blasio's Construction Advisory Council, the National Hispanic Business Group Board, and Brand Fire LLC's Advisory Board.



## **Hetal Parikh**

President

**[Rangam Consultants Inc.](#)**

Hetal Parikh is famous for carrying out Rangam's vision of "Employment for Everyone". These three words continuously inspire her to pave the path for many achievements, on both personal and professional fronts.

Hetal's overall vision is to create a people-centric workplace within Rangam and in corporations around the globe. For the past 20 years, Rangam has become a high-performing, diverse supplier of workforce solutions utilizing innovative technology and strategic delivery models. Hetal's out-of-the-box thinking not only inspires everyone at Rangam but also influences others to create a more collaborative workforce.

As a game-changer in the talent acquisition space, the Rangam team under Hetal's leadership has developed SourceAble<sup>TM</sup>, an end-to-end solution connecting

employers, job seekers who are differently abled, and support agencies. Rangam also offers SourceVets<sup>TM</sup>, a career development and employment program for transitioning military service members.





## Nayan Parikh

President

**Ashnu International Inc.**

Nayan Parikh is the owner of Ashnu International Inc., an award winning, premier M/WBE Construction and Management provider to a host of Federal, State and City Agencies, Corporations and other industries. For more than 15 years, he has continued to establish his name within the corridors of government agencies and has continued to build his reputation to his expertise in bringing excellent performance to the projects undertaken by his company. He has been the champion in leading many professional and community organizations and continues to give back to the society in many different ways. He has brought new ideas to fruition, both for profit and non-profit organizations.

After graduation from college, Parikh began his career as a Civil Engineer in India before migrating to the USA. In his new homeland, he began his career as an estimator in a small construction company, before quickly finding his own strength to become the founder and Managing Director of Ashnu International Inc. Parikh's vision, entrepreneurial aptitude, civil engineering background and broad range of expertise have made Ashnu International a name to be envied within the construction industry. His company is credited with many well-known projects including Sandy Repair work at Coney Island and

Rockaway Beach, multiple school renovations for NYC School Construction Authority, and Signal Modification at 71st Continental Ave with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Serving the community comes naturally to Parikh. From his first days of being a new immigrant to this country to the present, he has been involved and has given his time, knowledge and wisdom to community and professional non-profit organizations. Although he is a part of many organizations and affiliations, he takes pride in each and every one and maintains an active leadership role in these organizations. Currently, he's the president of the NAMC NY Tri-State Chapter. During his term he would like to bring more project procurements to his local chapter members. From humble beginnings and as a minority himself, he understands the struggle to make the right connections or get that big break. Parikh isn't afraid to reach out to make the necessary connection, which is one of his many strengths. Because of this, his network of associations varies in different influencers, who hold his opinion in high regards and has created a foray into creating an outreach program for his chapter members.

Affiliations: Member of Mayor Bill de Blasio's Construction Mentorship Advisory Panel and Construction and Real Estate Sector Advisory Council; Executive Member on NYS Governor's Advisory Board for M/WBE; Executive Board Member - Queens Chambers of Commerce; Executive Vice President - National Association of Minority Contractor (NAMC); President - New York Tri-State Chapter of the National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC); Diversity Board Member - NYCDDC (NYC Department of Design & Construction); Diversity Board Member - NYCSCA (NYC School Construction Authority); Executive Board Member - Regional Alliance; Executive Board Member - Building BTEA Government Affairs Council (Building Trades Employers' Association); Planning Board Member - Woodbridge Township, NJ; Executive Board Member- The Centurion Foundation; member of Mayor Bloomberg's Construction Mentorship Advisory Panel; Former President - Society of Indo American Engineers & Architects; Executive Board Member of Federation of Indian Association; NYC DEP Advisory Board; Founding President of International Swaminarayan Satsang Organization



## **Srini Penumella**

Managing Partner  
**Spruce Technology Inc.**

Srini Penumella is the Managing Partner of Spruce Technology Inc. Over the past 3 years, Srini has led the company to annual revenues of \$13 million dollars in 2013, and expanded from the headquarters in Clifton, NJ, to offices in New York, San Ramon, Boston, Bangalore and Hyderabad. Srini personifies Spruce's commitment to delivering the highest quality services to its clients around the country. He has built a reputation for his strong work ethic, results-oriented consensus building, and exceptional ability to forge and maintain major client relationships. In his role as Managing Partner, Srini is responsible for managing areas of strategic growth, alliances and partnerships, consulting services, business development, sales, and IT infrastructure. He has authored numerous scientific and engineering publications and holds winning patents and awards in R&D and innovative engineering design, including the Ohio Governor's Award for Excellence in Innovative Engineering and Creative Design. With almost 24 years of experience, he develops dynamic strategic business growth plans and brings strong relationships with senior leadership in both private and public sector clients.

Mr. Penumella has more than 20 years of experience leveraging technology to enhance communication, decision making, and productivity for organizations in diverse industries, from start-ups to large-scale enterprises. Before joining Spruce, Srini was Chief

Technology Officer at CMS, an alternate investment company with private equity, real estate, and wealth management lines of business. He also worked in Senior Management roles within professional services organizations servicing both private and federal sector clients. His experience included working as Program Manager and Project Manager at firms such as KPMG and Ernst & Young. Srini earned his B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from University of Madras and M.S. in Material Science and Engineering from the University of Cincinnati. He is currently a PMP and a member of Project Management Institute (PMI). He is also a certified six-sigma professional.

Mr. Penumella was recently recognized as a regional finalist for the 2020 EY Entrepreneur of the Year award. He received the 2017 Distinguished Alumni Award for Entrepreneurship from the Vellore Institute of Technology, where he completed his bachelor's degree, and was also a recipient of the 2014 SmartCEO award for Fastest-Growing Companies. He is a member of the Young Presidents Organization (YPO); a certified PMP and a member of the Project Management Institute (PMI); a certified six-sigma professional, a member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and a member of The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE).



**Rafael Perez, Jr.,  
A.M. ASCE**

President

**GCCOM Construction  
Company Inc.**

Rafael Perez, Jr. is a construction executive who is passionate about building and transforming the construction industry. He has a deep knowledge of the construction business and more than 28 years of Construction Management experience. Rafael has held leadership positions in Schiavone Construction Co. (now Dragados), Perini (now Tutor Perini), and Skanska USA Civil, NE, where he has learned from some of the best in the industry. Almost eight years ago, Rafael fulfilled his dream of having his own business.

He is currently the President of GCCOM Construction Company Inc., a Certified MBE & DBE Heavy Construction Company. Rafael graduated from Fairleigh Dickenson University with a Bachelor of Science in Construction Management. In 2019, he graduated from the PA Mentorship Program and is now dedicating some of his

time to mentoring small minority business owners. Rafael is passionate about giving back to the community and is actively involved in a few non-profit organizations such as The Boys and Girls Club of Paterson & Passaic of NJ, Eva's Village, The Mauer Foundation, and The Oasis Foundation.





## James Peterson

CEO and Executive Chef

**E.A.T. w/ Culinary Professionals Inc.**

James Peterson is the founder, CEO, and owner of E.A.T. W/Culinary Professionals Inc., a full-service Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) providing hospitality management, catering, prepared meals, and bulk food provisions. His mission is to deliver creative food experiences to his clients by offering quality goods, innovative services and culinary workforce training and management, with specific focus on economic development in underserved communities.

James is an accomplished chef with 35+ years of experience, who has honed his culinary skills in prestigious five-star restaurants and hotels such as Hyatt, Hilton and Marriott and Helmsley's Park Lane. He has had experience with leading food companies including Canteen Corporation, Sodexo Marriott, and Restaurant Associates.

James is no stranger to leadership in the ever-changing food service industry. He has served as a Union Organizer and as a Union Business Agent for the New York and Washington, D.C.'s Hotel and Motel Trades Councils. James worked selflessly to uphold union contracts and protect the rights of his fellow union brothers and sisters.

James' leadership has created a client base that includes multiple governmental agencies in New York City and across New York State, Fortune 100 Corporations and major non-profit entities. He has increased his company's capabilities to accommodate client food requests that range up to multiple thousands which has resulted in his

involvement in COVID-19 emergency feeding programs. E.A.T. w/Culinary Professionals Inc. has become a NYC Preferred Vendor due to his diligent hard work.

James has provided developmental and economic opportunities to many from underserved communities, including recently incarcerated or public assistance dependents. He supports young adults as a mentor and paves the way for generations to come. James has also assisted distressed small businesses during difficult periods with his inclusionary strategies.

James continues to serve as a leader in his community as an active member of the International Free & Accepted Modern Masons and Order of Eastern Stars and as a 25-year founding member of One Hundred Black Men Incorporated and currently serves on their board.

James has received a number of accolades for outstanding work in the Metropolitan New York Area, including the Emerging Business Award from the City of New York, Outstanding Business Development Growth from the Bronx Chamber of Commerce, and The Mentor of the Year award from the One Hundred Black Men organization. Many organizations have recognized and honored his experience with Project Revitalization/Project Return in mobilizing materials, donations, and manpower to areas most in need in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina.



## **Elizabeth Velez**

President

**Velez Organization**

Elizabeth Velez is the President of the Velez Organization, a second-generation construction firm started in 1972 by her father, Andrew Velez. To her credit are hundreds of projects which have come to fruition under her direction, including more than 600 units of housing made affordable by State and Federal grants in the Bronx and Harlem, and more than 10 billion dollars of significant educational, healthcare, and large-scale projects throughout New York.

Ms. Velez is the current Chairperson of the New York Building Congress, and the first person of color and second woman to serve as such in the Congress' 99-year history. She is a Trustee of Boricua College, an accredited private institution serving primarily Latinas through three campuses in NY. She serves on the advisory boards of numerous NYC and NYS agencies, industry non-profits, and groups supporting mentorship and scholarships for youth. She is a member of the Board for Catholic Charities and the NYC Police Foundation. She is currently serving as a Commissioner of the NYC Property Tax Reform Commission. Following Hurricane Maria's disastrous landfall, Elizabeth was appointed to Governor Cuomo's NY

Stands with Puerto Rico Recovery & Rebuilding Committee, the NY Memorial Commission for Hurricane Maria, and has spearheaded numerous workforce and economic development programs – including a satellite corporate office in Ponce Puerto Rico.

On the international front, Ms. Velez is Co-Chair of Iran 180 – an organization that advocates for human rights and the end to Iran's nuclear threat. She is a contributor to media outlets such as MSNBC Morning Joe, Matter of Fact TV with Soledad O'Brien, Fox News Latino, Daily News, Wall Street Journal, El Diario La Prensa, Hispanic Business, ENR, City & State, DowntownNY, and Crain's NY Business. She is an outspoken advocate for diversity and empowerment of women, and a sought-after speaker on women's leadership and work/family balance issues. In addition to numerous awards and recognition, Ms. Velez was recognized by City & State as one of the "Manhattan Power 50".

Ms. Velez holds an MBA from Hofstra University.



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**Francilia Wilkins  
Rahim**

CEO and Founder

**R.F. Wilkins Consultants Inc.**

R.F. Wilkins Consultants Inc. is a New York-based Business Development and Management Consulting Firm. We partner with nonprofits, small businesses, government agencies, and corporations to meet their development and expansion needs. Services under our umbrella include project management, technology systems integration, fundraising and capital sourcing, technical assistance, stakeholder engagement, and compliance.

To date, Mrs. Francilia Wilkins Rahim has aided in the development of numerous citywide diversity and inclusion initiatives and continues to advocate for equal opportunity for minority real estate developers, contractors, and small businesses. She has engaged more than 5,000 local businesses and has led the company in raising more than \$900 million for clients through grant writing, advocacy and events; growing its reputation in the ranks of top-performing management consulting firms, owned by a minority woman. In partnership with the New York Real Estate Chamber and the NYC Economic Development Corporation, she worked to develop the City's Emerging Developer Loan Fund. Mrs. Wilkins Rahim has spearheaded Google's NYC Google Digital Coaches program to create access for minority- and women-owned small businesses throughout the

city. In 2019, HNTB and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey named R.F. Wilkins Consultants one of two Compliance contractors responsible for ensuring minority and local inclusion across the \$13 billion John F. Kennedy Airport Redevelopment Project.

In addition to her role as CEO of R. F. Wilkins Consultants, Mrs. Wilkins Rahim was recently appointed to the Board of Directors for Greater Allen Development Corporation & Allen Community Non-Profit Programs. She was also appointed in 2020 to the Mayor's COVID-19 Real Estate & Construction Sector Advisory Council. Mrs. Wilkins Rahim serves as the Executive Director of the New York Real Estate Chamber, Member of NYS Housing and Community Renewal's Multifamily Advisory Council, and Vice Chair of Brooklyn's Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District. Formerly, she served as Director of Economic Development for the National Black MBA Association-New York Metro Chapter, Chair of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.'s Regional Economic Development Committee, Assistant Treasurer for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., Queens Alumnae Chapter and the Vice Chair for I Am Acceptance Inc. – a mental health non-profit.