



## New Haven Free Public Library Board of Directors



### **The Honorable Mayor, Justin Elicker, *ex-officio***

Justin grew up in Connecticut. He attended public school, graduated with a BA from Middlebury College in Vermont, and earned both a Master's in Business Administration from the Yale School of Management and a Masters in Environmental Management from the Yale School of Forestry. Justin speaks Spanish and Chinese. He has been an elementary and high school teacher (for at-risk youth) and served for three years as an adjunct professor of education policy at Southern Connecticut State University.

Justin has a wealth of experience in government. He served for four years on the New Haven Board of Alders where he was a champion for residents across the city who felt unheard, underserved, and unsupported by the City of New Haven. He advocated for renters who lived in sub-standard apartments under absentee landlords, and fought against predatory landlords. With his constituents' support and at their requests, he promoted fostering more positive, community-police interaction in an underserved neighborhood in order to help mitigate neighbors' feelings of mistrust and suspicion of police. He successfully implemented neighborhood and economic development improvements in the Cedar Hill neighborhood to promote more business activity and improve quality of life. He promoted protections for gender identity. On the Board of Alders, Justin was also one of the strongest voices for long-term fiscal responsibility, government transparency, and smart governance. He had both one of the best attendance records on the Board, and the best response rates for constituent service requests. In 2013, Justin ran for Mayor in one of the most exciting and close elections in decades. Justin came in second with 45.3% of the vote.

Justin's government experience started long before his involvement at the Board of Alders. Justin worked for five years as a Foreign Service Officer in the U.S. State Department. He was posted to Washington, D.C., Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Justin had a substantive focus on U.S. economic and environmental policy. While working for the U.S. government abroad was rewarding and challenging, Justin decided to leave the State Department to come to New Haven because he wanted to live near his family, put down roots, and get involved in a local community that he believed in. Justin lives in East Rock with his wife, Natalie, and daughters Molly and April.

Justin is now the 51st Mayor of New Haven, and will work hard so that every resident has the opportunity to thrive, no matter where they live.

## **PRESIDENT**



**Shana N. Schneider** is the Founder of Fitstyle by Shana and the Fitstyle Your Life™ approach to fitness. She is passionate about helping people live and enjoy their life to the fullest by helping them find time for fitness in their everyday life. As an entrepreneur and author, Shana is a sought-after workshop and walk leader and has been featured in national and regional magazines, websites and fitness blogs.

Prior to starting her own company, Shana held several roles in the Yale University administration, including Deputy Director of the Yale Entrepreneurial Institute, Director of Communications & Economic

Development for the Office of New Haven & State Affairs, and Director of Communications for the Office of International Affairs. She was also a Senior Program Manager at Technolutions.

She is an AFAA certified group fitness instructor and holds a B.A. from Yale University. She is the proud co-founder of a 10+ year old women's book club and can often be found walking her errands and listening to an audio book or podcast in her adopted hometown of New Haven.

## **VICE PRESIDENT**



**Dolores Garcia-Blocker, Ed.D.**, is the Director of College & Career Pathways for New Haven Public Schools and has more than 25 successful years in public education in urban and suburban settings with administrative experience at the elementary school, middle school, secondary school, and central office levels. Dr. Garcia-Blocker came to New Haven as Principal of the Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School in 2004 with previous experience in Irvington and Brooklyn, New York.

A leader with demonstrated success in inspiring and empowering others to advance the goals of the school district, Dr. Garcia-Blocker is the recipient of numerous honors and awards including the New England Counselors of Color Bridging Access to College Leadership Award, the National Council of Negro Women, Inc. Outstanding Educator Award and Yale University's Seton Elm Ivy Award. Dr. Garcia-Blocker has an Ed.D in Educational Administration from Teachers College, Columbia University, an M.S. in Health/Fitness Management, and a B.A. in Spanish from Spelman College. She participated in George Washington University's Teacher Certification Program in ESL and most recently in the University of Connecticut, Neag School of Education, Executive Leadership Program.

## TREASURER



**Alex Sulpasso** is currently Vice President, Operations Manager at Guilford Savings Bank. Prior to working in banking, Alex worked for Continuity, a New Haven company in the financial technology industry. During his time there, Continuity twice made the Inc., 5000 list of fastest growing private companies in the United States. Additional roles in real estate and government round out his professional background. As an undergraduate, Alex also interned with the National Governor's Association.

Alex was born and raised in the New Haven area and is part of a large Italian-American family with roots in Wooster Square that remain today.

After graduating from East Haven High School, Alex received Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Political Science from Southern Connecticut State University.

Alex has been an active contributor to New Haven's social fabric since officially moving into the city in 2012. In addition to volunteering for several area non-profits, Alex also served on the New Haven Free Public Library Foundation Board of Directors from 2016-2019. Alex spends his free time enjoying all New Haven has to offer with his wife and two young children. Some favorite destinations are the farmers' markets, many great restaurants, and the New Haven Free Public Library, of course.

## BOARD MEMBERS



**Lauren Anderson** is an Associate Professor of Education at Connecticut College, where she landed after years teaching elementary school, coaching new teachers in city schools, and working at UCLA, Northwestern, and the University of Southern California. Lauren's college courses focus on the history and politics of education in the US, and also about the more practical aspects of being an excellent teacher in and for these times. Her scholarship is situated at the intersections of education policy, teacher education, and K-12 school and classroom practice.

Beyond the classroom, Lauren strives to support grassroots' efforts aimed at protecting public education from privatization and advancing educational justice. Prior to her current role, she served as an Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education and as a Post Doctoral Fellow at the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University. Lauren holds a B.A. in Political Science from Yale University, an M.S.Ed. in Early Childhood and Elementary Education from Bank Street College, and a Ph.D. in Education from the University of California, Los Angeles.

She loves working on literacy initiatives with youth, elders and everyone in between. When she's not at work, you can usually find Lauren reading novels, eating spicy vegetarian food, dancing, hiking, or doing just about anything else outdoors.



**Andrew P. Giering** is an attorney with the Federal Defender Office for the District of Connecticut, where he represents defendants financially unable to retain counsel in federal criminal proceedings. He is passionate about social justice and committed to alleviating the effects of socioeconomic inequality. Andrew believes strongly that the New Haven Free Public Library is a powerful force for equality by providing equal access to knowledge and empowering economic success.

A current resident of City Point, Andrew was born and raised in the New Haven area and his family has lived here for more than a century. Prior to entering government service, he worked as a litigation associate at Wiggin and Dana in New Haven and Sullivan & Cromwell in New York. Additional roles in government and politics cap off his professional background. Andrew earned a J.D. from Yale Law School and a B.A. in History from Columbia University, and is a proud alumnus of Hopkins School and the West Haven public school system.

Since moving back to New Haven for good in 2016, Andrew has endeavored to contribute to his community, and in addition to the Library also serves on the Board of Directors of Artspace and the Connecticut Italian American Bar Association.



**Claudia Merson** is the Director of Public School Partnerships for Yale University. She has expressed her passionate concern for young people and their education through innovative programming, skillful coalition building, and strategic visioning for long-term sustainability. Claudia's onpoint administrative style ensures that logistics never impede true creative process.

Claudia has established a broad array of sustainable programs and partnerships between Yale University and the New Haven Public Schools. She convened and co-chaired the first university-wide K-12 science outreach advisory committee that resulted in the creation of Pathways to Science, Yale's coordinated data-driven STEM outreach initiative. This coordinated infrastructure creates an environment for highimpact outreach programming by making it easier and less costly for members of the University community to participate, a critical feature which has supported the sustained growth of both the total number of programs and number of Yale faculty involved in these programs. More importantly, Pathways supports a trajectory of increasingly rigorous STEM experiences for thousands of pre-college public school students and allows for more seamless transitions across critical educational junctures.

Claudia came to Yale with twenty-one years of experience as a teacher, librarian, program and curriculum developer and has worked in schools in Manhattan, Bangladesh and Switzerland. She received a B.A. from Georgia State University and an M.Ed. from Harvard University.



The **Honorable Jeanette Morrison** is the current Alder of Ward 22 representing the Dixwell and Yale communities in New Haven. Her role as local representative is a natural extension of all of her personal and professional experiences which have all related to her passion to bring families together and provide opportunities for children.

A life-long New Havener, born and raised in Newhallville, she is a proud alumna of Hillhouse High School. She was Ms. Hillhouse and captain of the cheerleading Team. After Hillhouse, she took her talents to the historically black college Morgan State University where she received the Alice W. Parham Outstanding Service Award. She then moved on to do higher educational work at Boston University and Southern Connecticut State University in human services, social work and business respectively.

Upon entering the workforce, she served as a social worker at Yale New Haven Hospital and for the State of Connecticut. She taught as a professor at Central Connecticut State University and Gateway Community College, and a teacher/facilitator for the Parent Leadership Training Institute.

Beyond being an elected official, she has held roles in National Association of Black Social Workers, the Elm City Young Adult Club of the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women, the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the New Haven Board of Alders Black and Hispanic Caucus. She currently serves as the Aldermanic representative to the New Haven Free Public Library's Board of Directors. All of which she fits in while being the proud mother of her daughter Jaydah and her son Jordan.