
CIVIC INSIGHTS

MARCH 2026 | ISSUE 2



MARCH ISSUE: WOMENS HISTORY MONTH

Celebrating women's leadership and highlighting pressing issues across the Hudson Valley

Women's March 2020 Washington DC

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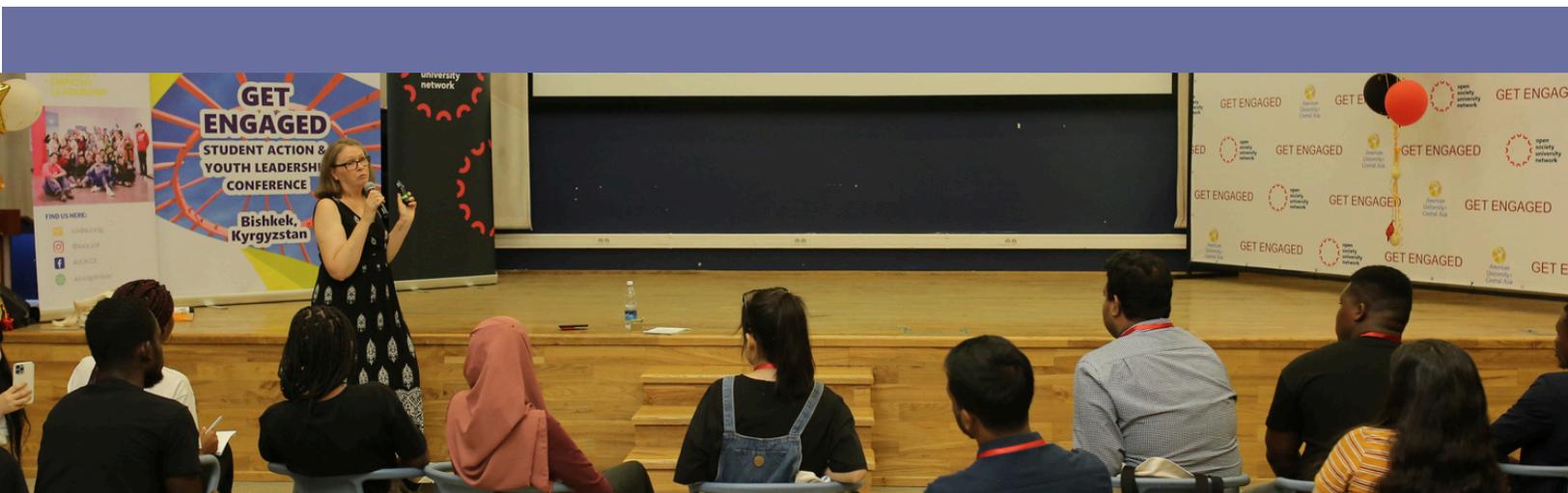
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Meet our Team

DAMIAN J. RAMIREZ

Prospective Politics and Medieval Studies Major, First Year

My passion for civic engagement lies in informing and educating others in ways that inspire meaningful action.

VISHAL PARKASH

Economics & Finance Major, Junior

My commitment to civic engagement stems from a people-planet-purpose vision, as it represents the perfect way to build bridges through thoughtful methodologies—exactly what we strive to do at Civic Ambassadors.

NADIA TRINIDAD

Politics and Human Rights Major, Sophomore

I have found civic engagement on a local level to be one of the most important forms of direct democracy - going beyond the electoral process.

MADISON JORDAN

Politics and French Studies Major, Sophomore

I love being involved in initiatives such as gender equity, where I get to put my own input into civic spaces and make a difference. A huge goal of mine is to encourage others to also put their beliefs into action.

ZLATA PASLON

Global and International Studies & Economics Major, Junior

I am interested in civic engagement at the intersection of global issues, education, and community advocacy.

CHELSEA GARCIA

Global and International Studies, Freshman

It often feels as though change can only happen on a federal level. However, being engaged in our communities tells us that that's a complete lie. We can see the impact we create first hand when we get involved locally.

[Visit Our Website](#)

Email - civic@bard.edu

Instagram - [@bardcce](#)

Civic Ambassadors Run by
the Center For Civic
Engagement

LETTER FROM YOUR AMBASSADORS



women writers - 1873

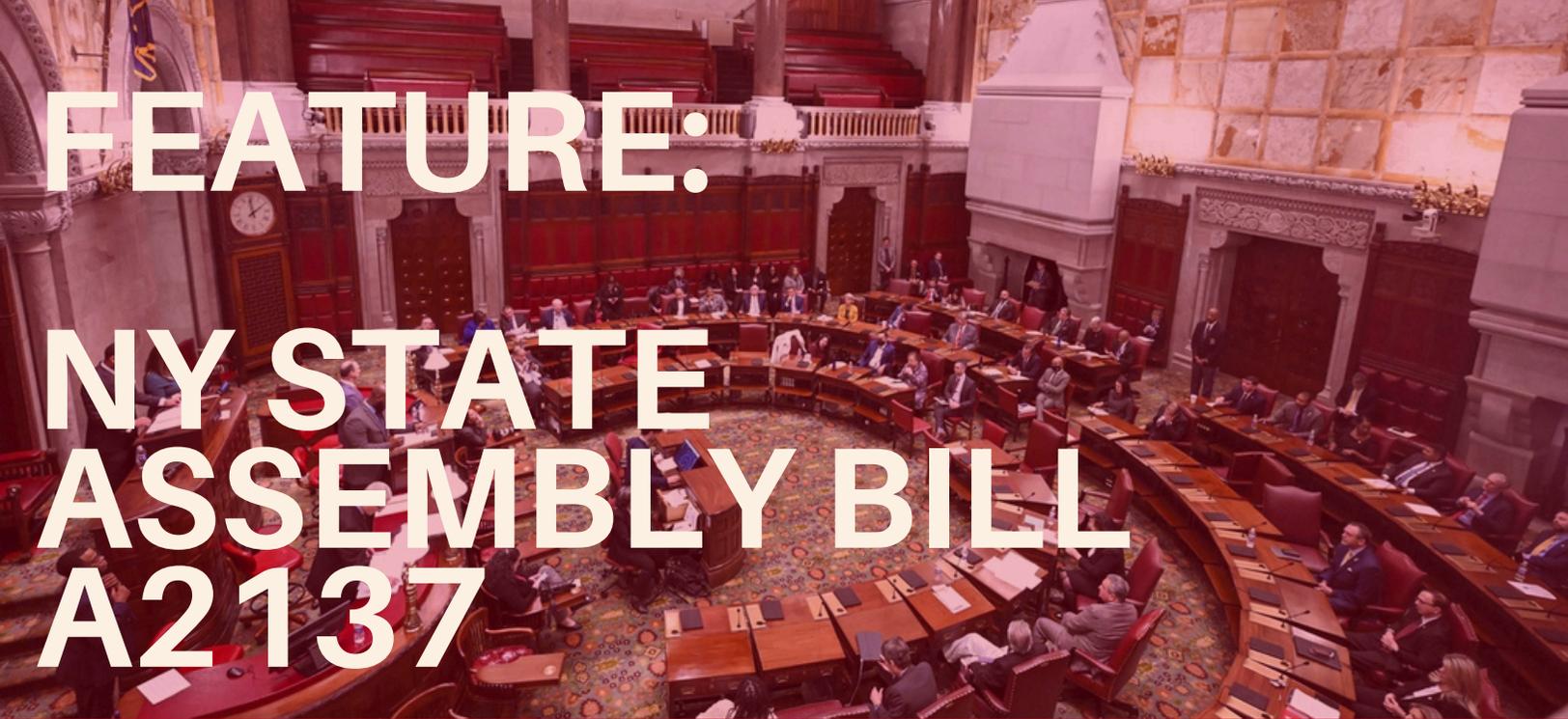
Dear Reader,

Welcome to the March edition of [Civic Insights](#) the Civic Ambassadors monthly magazine! Each month we will publish a magazine focusing on a different theme, with the purpose of providing a lens into local civic actions, and how you can get involved. In celebration of Womens History Month, this edition focuses on the contributions of women leaders both in the Hudson Valley and Abroad!

We also address ongoing legislation related to women's rights today. Highlighting the legacy and ongoing work of women leaders locally and globally we hope to inspire you into action!

Highlighting the legacy and ongoing work of women leaders locally and globally we hope to inspire you into action!

*Your
Ambassadors*



FEATURE:

NY STATE ASSEMBLY BILL A2137

Assembly Chamber at the state Capitol in Albany. Photo by Hans Pennink

Assembly Bill A2137 doesn't change who can get an abortion in New York; it changes how the state helps people actually reach that care, especially if they're broke or traveling long distances. It plugs a very practical gap in New York's post-Roe framework by defining and funding "practical support" around abortion access.

THE BIG PICTURE: BUILDING OUT THE 2024 FUND

In 2024, New York created the Reproductive Freedom and Equity Grant Program to support abortion and related reproductive care, including for people traveling in

from other states. A2137 amends that existing law, sharpening its focus so the program can pay not just clinics, but also the on-the-ground costs that often stop someone from getting to an appointment at all.

NEW DEFINITION: "PRACTICAL SUPPORT"

The bill writes a new term into the Public Health Law: "practical support." It defines this as financial assistance given directly or indirectly to an individual so they can access abortion care, as opposed to medical services themselves.

In practice, that category is intentionally broad: state-funded grants could cover ground and air transportation, lodging, meals, childcare, translation services, and doula support, among other non-medical costs tied to an abortion visit. The goal is to treat those expenses as part of the real price of an abortion, particularly for low-income patients, undocumented people, and out-of-state travelers using New York as a safe-harbor state after Dobbs.

SECTION 1: TIGHTENING THE LANGUAGE OF THE LAW

Section 1 of A2137 rewrites the definitions section of Public Health Law § 2599-bb-1, the statute governing the Reproductive Freedom and Equity Grant Program. It leaves in place existing definitions of “abortion” and “health care services,” but adds “practical support” and explicitly labels the “program” as the Reproductive Freedom and Equity Grant Program.

That might sound technical, but it’s a quiet power shift: once “practical support” is defined, state health officials can write regulations and award grants with that category in mind, elevating support funds and grassroots groups alongside brick-and-mortar clinics. It also helps insulate the program legally by anchoring these supports in statute, not just in budget language or executive policy.



“For New York’s abortion-access landscape, that moves the conversation from ‘Is it legal?’ to ‘Can you actually get there?’, and puts the state on the hook to help answer yes.”

SECTION 2: DIRECTING MONEY TO PATIENTS’ REAL-WORLD NEEDS

Section 2 amends subdivision 3 of § 2599-bb-1, which lays out what the grant program can fund, by adding a specific directive: grants may be used to “address practical support needs of individuals accessing abortion care” who cannot afford those costs. In doing so, it authorizes state dollars to flow to organizations that specialize in things like travel coordination, hotel vouchers, meal stipends, childcare assistance, or on-ground navigation support.

This is the section that links the abstract definition to actual funding priorities: it tells the Health Department that helping someone buy a bus ticket, find a bed, or bring a translator is just as legitimate a use of state reproductive-health money as paying for a procedure. For New York’s abortion-access landscape, that moves the conversation from “Is it legal?” to “Can you actually get there?”, and puts the state on the hook to help answer yes.

SPOTLIGHT:

REDI SCHOOL OF DIGITAL INTEGRATION

The groundbreaking work of
Anne Kjaer Bathel

In 2015, as Europe faced an unprecedented refugee crisis, Anne Kjaer Bathel saw not just a humanitarian challenge but an opportunity. She co-founded the ReDI School of Digital Integration in Berlin—a non-profit tech school that provides free coding and digital skills training to refugees, migrants, and marginalized locals who lack access to digital education.

What began as "Refugees on Rails" in a Berlin refugee home has grown into a global movement with locations across Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and online platforms reaching students worldwide. ReDI School now teaches over 2,000 students annually (65% women and girls) through programs including the Digital Career Program, Digital Women Program, and Digital Youth Program for children ages 8-15. The impact is remarkable: 75% of Digital Career Program graduates secure paid jobs, mostly in tech.





Bathel's approach combines MOOC content with support from 100+ volunteer tech professionals, creating mentorship networks that don't just teach code—they build community and confidence. Her work has earned recognition including Germany's "Courageous Person of the Year" (2018), Best Female Social Entrepreneur (2020), and Ashoka Fellowship (2021).

Bard College Berlin student clubs have collaborated with ReDI School on initiatives connecting the global Bard community to this innovative model of integration through digital education.

GET INVOLVED:

Get Involved: Contact Vishal Parkash (vp1611@bard.edu) to explore volunteer or collaboration opportunities with ReDI School, or visit www.redi-school.org to learn more about supporting digital integration worldwide.

TAKE ACTION



International Women's Month is a time not only to celebrate women's leadership, but to actively support the policies, organizations, and movements advancing gender equity across New York State. Turning awareness into action can be simple, concrete, and impactful.



Support Active Campaigns

One step is to sign petitions and support campaigns led by groups such as **For the Many** and **Citizen Action of New York**, which organize around economic justice, reproductive rights, and fair housing policies that directly affect women and families.

Contact Elected Officials

You can also contact your elected officials to advocate for paid family leave expansion, protections against gender-based violence, and equitable healthcare access. Attending town halls or public meetings is another way to make your voice heard locally.



2

Attend Community Events and Actions

Showing up matters. Participate in local events or volunteer with organizations like **Girls for Gender Equity** or **National Organization for Women - New York**.



3

Keep Yourself Informed

Finally, commit to learning more — read about current gender equity legislation, follow women-led organizing efforts, and stay engaged beyond March. Civic engagement is ongoing, and every action strengthens collective progress.



4

EVENTS CALENDAR

Evergreen

Office Hours

Time: Sundays at 11am - 12pm

Location: Hegeman 102, Bard College

Weekly Tabling

Time:

- Monday 1:30 PM- 2:30 PM (Campus Center)
- Wednesday 2 PM - 4 PM and Friday 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM (Kline)



April

03

Making Change: A discussion on Economic Fairness and Social Justice

Time:

- Panel: 6:30pm - 8pm
- Networking: 8pm - 9pm

Location: Olin 102, Bard College

RESOURCES AND READING



Maya Angelou

Action often starts with knowledge. Here are some interesting resources to inform yourself on the history and current state of women's rights across the globe.

- 1 ***NY State Senate Bill Tracker***
www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills
Use this resource to track legislation - like Assembly Bill A2137 on Abortion Access - in the New York State Assembly
- 2 ***Deutsche Welle - Inside the Women's Like Freedom' Protest Movement in Iran***
Deutsche Welle, 2026
This documentary takes a look at the fight for women's rights in Iran through the "Women, Life, Freedom Movement", that started in 2022
- 3 ***The Shadow King***
Maaza Mengiste, 2019
Set during Mussolini's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia, this novel centers the role of the women soldiers who fought to bring an end to the Italian occupation of Ethiopia.
- 4 ***How Do We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective***
Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, 2012
This Book explores the Combahee River Collective, a black radical feminist movement that emerged in Boston at the intersection of the Civil Rights and Women's Rights movements of the 60s and 70s.
- 5 ***Interview: Women's Rights Under Trump***
Human Rights Watch, 2024
In the wake of Trump's re-election, Macarena Saez, the director of Human Rights Watch's women's rights division, addresses questions about the state of women's rights under Trump and the ways people are fighting back.
- 6 ***The Abortion Issue Not Enough New Yorkers are Talking About***
Rights This Way Podcast - NYCLU, 2024
This Podcast addresses the relevance of Prop 1, the NY Equal Rights Amendment, for abortion protections in the wake of the Dobbs v. Jackson.

AMBASSADOR UPDATES

A LOOK AT HOW CIVIC AMBASSADORS ARE BUILDING CONNECTIONS, PLANNING IMPACTFUL EVENTS, AND STRENGTHENING BARD'S COMMUNITY TIES ACROSS THE HUDSON VALLEY!

This month, Civic Ambassadors have been working behind the scenes to plan upcoming programming and develop meaningful content for the semester. We discussed event logistics, community outreach strategies, and ways to strengthen connections between Bard students and local organizations across the Hudson Valley. A major focus has been organizing our upcoming Panel Discussion and Networking session which will bring together organizations and leaders across the Hudson Valley who are eager to connect with students! Check out the events tab for details. In celebration of International Women's Month, we also want to recognize and appreciate every woman leader in our community and beyond. Thank you to everyone who has shared their time, energy, and ideas, we're looking forward to what's ahead!

