

2017 YWCA TORONTO WOMAN OF DISTINCTION

TRANSFORMING LIVES



CETA RAMKHALAWANSINGH

*Public Service & Social Justice – Feminist, Activist
and City Builder*

Lifelong social justice advocate, city builder and public servant, Ceta Ramkhalawansingh has shown tireless grit and determination to create a more inclusive and equitable community. For three decades she was the Equity and Diversity Manager at Toronto City Hall, establishing pioneering diversity and human rights policies and programs emulated by many organizations and helping to make Toronto a social justice leader.

Ceta's family moved to Toronto from Trinidad and Tobago in 1967, shortly after which she became an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto (U of T). She soon was a student leader fighting sexism on campus, promoting student participation in university governance and advocating for the introduction of women's studies. These initial efforts evolved into U of T's Women and Gender Studies Institute, offering graduate and undergraduate degrees.

Creating change in Toronto paralleled her commitment to achieving women's empowerment globally. Over a 20-year period she worked on international women's rights development advocacy as President, Treasurer and Board Member of the MATCH International Women's Fund. She helped to establish the Commonwealth Women's Network and on two occasions was the Non-Governmental Organization representative on official Canadian delegations to meetings of Commonwealth Status of Women Ministers. While serving on the Ontario Government's Advisory Council on Women from 1983 to 1988, she was a formidable advocate. Recently, she worked on campaigns for a gender neutral national anthem and gender equality in the Canadian Senate.

Ceta is a legend in the downtown Grange neighbourhood where she successfully saved and increased rental and affordable housing, protected heritage and green space, and fought developments, with numerous interventions at Ontario Municipal Board hearings. In 2014, Ceta was selected by City Council as the Ward 20 City Councillor, winning the appointment from among 26 candidates.

She has received many awards for feminist, anti-racism and human rights advocacy, publishing, heritage preservation and volunteerism. Currently, she chairs the boards of The Word on the Street Canada and the Learnx Foundation. Her board memberships include the Toronto Foundation, Friends of Fort York, Innis College Council and the Investing in Diversity Scholarship program.

Feminist to the core, Ceta is always adding accomplishments to her story. For Ceta, the work is never done.



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