

2018 YWCA TORONTO WOMEN OF DISTINCTION



MARCIE PONTE *Community Builder*

Marcie Ponte understood early in her impressive career the importance of the grassroots – giving voice to lived experience and observing how such energies can transform our communities. Marcie has been transformative and innovative in her dedication to rights and equity.

Under her dedicated leadership since 1999, Working Women Community Centre has burgeoned into a strong vibrant organization. She leads from a place of passion and empowerment and seeks to create bridges to success for the many newcomer women welcomed by her Centre every day.

Through her various community engagements, she celebrates inclusion, civic engagement and the brilliance of diversity as she champions women to the forefront of community initiatives. She was instrumental in seeing to fruition the Rosina Shopkeeper's Project – a community initiative intended to honour the legacy of Rosina Peluso, one of many immigrant shopkeepers who made important contributions to our city's entrepreneurial landscape.

Marcie's dedication to her work is born out of personal experience. At the age of seven, she arrived in Canada from the Azores with her Portuguese speaking parents. Later, she would translate her personal experience into her work with the impact of precarious employment. At the age of 18 she joined the Cleaners' Action Group an advocacy group advancing the cause of newcomer

office cleaners in downtown Toronto. She further made contributions to the labour force as a union organizer for International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union as well as the coordinator for the Labour Studies Program for the Labour Council of Metro Toronto and York Region.

Marcie has been an advisor on Premier Wynne's Roundtable on Social Services. She is chronicled for her expertise in matters of immigration, equity and justice. As a visionary to showcase women's contributions, she facilitated the publication of the book *Making the City: Women Who Made a Difference*. This first person account documents the history of immigrant women and their influence over three decades of social change in Toronto. Marcie has been awarded the Access, Equity and Human Rights from the City of Toronto in 2016 and is a recipient of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. In 2007 she received the Professional Excellence Award from the Federation of Portuguese Canadian Business and Professionals. Marcie steadfastly supports those around her and is a beacon for her community.

