



CNR Alumni Awardees 2023 Alumni of Distinction



Dr. Shango Blake, SNR 93, GS '96, GS '11. Blake took his undergraduate courses at the CNR School of New Resources' Rosa Parks campus in Harlem. "All the courses made you think of social justice," he recalled at the ceremony. Blake also earned master's degrees from CNR in guidance and counseling and in communication arts and studies.

As a NYC principal, seeing the need for drastic changes in the school, he created a bold educational program which led to his becoming recognized nationally as the Hip Hop Principal.

In accepting his Alumni of Distinction Award, Blake talked about his educational philosophy, noting that young people often are unjustly written off. "I want you to understand that these young people we call 'at risk' are not at risk. They are underestimated." He called on society to change its attitudes toward youth. "A neglected child will burn down the village just to feel its warmth," he warned.

Blake also thanked Mercy College and its president, Timothy Hall, "on behalf of the College of New Rochelle. When we needed a home, Mercy College was there."



Dr. Sandy Cayo, SN '08. Cayo is a Family Nurse Practitioner who started her career as a clinical nurse at Yale New Haven Hospital in 2008, the year she graduated from CNR's School of Nursing. She earned a Doctor of Nurse Practice degree from Fairfield University in 2014 and is currently completing her PhD at Duquesne University.

An assistant professor at Yale University, she also has owned and operated her own telemedicine practice. As an advocate for global health, she travels to Haiti, Nigeria and Ghana each year to conduct health fairs and instruct courses in nursing education.

At the awards ceremony, Cayo said her parents immigrated from Haiti in the 1980s and she grew up in Bridgeport, CT. In 2004, she decided to attend CNR, where she was offered a full scholarship and a laptop. "CNR was such an incredible experience. 'Wisdom for Life' was our motto," she recalled.

Cayo continued, "I am grateful for the scholarships I received at CNR and am definitely committed to giving back, in particular supporting the underserved and underrepresented in health care."



Chris Morrison, SAS '72. Morrison retired as an assistant attorney general for the New York State Attorney General. Her previous career positions included a research scientist for the NYS Department of Drug Abuse Services and an assistant district attorney in the Bronx.

"Attending CNR was one of the best decisions I made," Morrison said at the ceremony, citing "the values instilled in me and the lifelong friendships I made. (CNR) provided us a dynamic environment to think critically, pursue our passions and our dreams and become strong and independent women."

Morrison was recognized for her many volunteer activities, focused on immigrant communities and improving public schools. She chaired the board of the Maura Clarke – Ita Ford Literacy Center in Bushwick, Brooklyn for six years. (The Center is named in memory of two missionary nuns murdered in El Salvador in 1980.)

"The CNR motto, 'Serviam' is "applicable in all aspects of our lives," Morrison explained. "I am very blessed... (we have) an obligation to serve the less fortunate."

She also paid tribute to the warm welcome and support Mercy has extended to CNR alums. Reflecting on the Class of '72's 50th reunion, held on Mercy's Dobbs Ferry campus last June, she said, "All my classmates and myself had a wonderful time."



Rev. Pearl Sullivan, SNR '03 and GS '15. Sullivan retired because of an injury after 14 years as a New York City police officer and started earning her degree at New Resources' Co-op City campus soon after. "The motto of 'Serviam' was forged in my heart the minute I walked in the doors," she said, in accepting the award. "Thank God for giving us the Ursulines."

While an undergrad, Sullivan worked with Co-op City campus directors to start Students of Victory which offered monthly prayer services for students. She then worked at CNR for 12 years as coordinator of retention services and earned a master's degree in public administration there in 2015. "Studying there and working there was one of the greatest experiences of my life," she told the awards gathering.

After being ordained by the Miracle World Outreach Ministries, Sullivan decided to join the ministry full-time in 2017. She is a minister administrator at Miracle Worship Center in the Bronx, working with the community on food, clothing and school supply collections, as well as raising funds for international projects.

Noting its similar motto for service, Sullivan praised Mercy for initiating the partnership with CNR. "I am grateful that the Legacy will continue," she told the group. "We've got a big legacy. Let us continue to forge forward."