

# "Thank You For Your Service" !

A Human Rights Conference for Veterans, Service Members, !  
their Families, and their Advocates !

## Speaker Biographies

**Diana Lynn Patton** is the President of the We Exist Coalition, past Co-Chair of Spectrum Transgender Group of Western New York, was the Administrative Assistant at the Pride Center of Western New York for three years, and a speaker for Transgender Education.

After graduating high school, Diana served honorably in the United States Navy for three years under the following professions and schools: Nuclear Electricians Mate, Firecontrolman, Machinist Mate, Personnelman, Hull-Technician. Diana has worked for TCI Cable Company as a dispatcher, a Shea's Theater Bartender, Inventory Control Specialist at Carlton Technologies, and production at Ford Buffalo Stamping Plant before landing a part time job at the Pride Center of WNY.

Diana started her journey in 2008 after many years of living roles in life that did not agree with her internal self. She began to look inward during her studies at Hilbert College while studying Economics Crime Investigation. Diana discovered she was a transgender woman after doing research on people who suffer from migraines and severe depression.

Currently, Diana works advocating for the transgender community and Veterans. She is an activist and finds resources for women, trans and gender non-conforming people, and Veterans. Diana teaches classes on gender identity, the transgender experience, and how to be an advocate.

**Cheryl Dupris** served for 33 years in the United States Army, with 20 years of active duty service as a Personnel Manager and a Chaplain Assistant, and 13 years in the Army Reserves, National Guard, and Individual Ready Reserves. Her military service includes four deployments to Iraq, a deployment to Afghanistan, and a humanitarian tour in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita.

A Native American from the Sioux Nation of South Dakota, Cheryl came to New York City in 1997 and joined the New York Army National Guard as a Long-Haul Tractor Trailer truck driver in an elite eighteen-wheel truck company. As a Reservist, she also worked for Verizon for fifteen years, retiring from the company in 2014.

Following her fourth deployment to Iraq, Cheryl retired from the Army, completing her out-processing in August 2010. Today, she advocates for Veterans at the American Indian Community House in New York City, including advocacy for the development of culturally competent telehealth programs for Native American Veterans who receive therapeutic treatment from the VA.

**Morgan Woodson** is a United States Air Force Veteran from Buffalo, New York. She served for four years as a Pharmacy Technician with the 60th MDTs at Travis Air Force Base from 2007 to 2011. In 2010 she deployed to Afghanistan and was assigned to a Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility unit that assisted with stabilizing and transporting the wounded.

After being medically retired from the Air Force, Morgan returned to Buffalo to pursue a degree in business at Medaille College and a Masters' in Public Administration at Hilbert College. While studying she was active with the student Veterans' organization and created the Office of Veterans' Affairs at Hilbert College as modeled by her Masters' thesis.

Today, Morgan continues to be active in the Veterans community of Western New York through her advocacy work with the New York State Division of Veterans' Services as a Veterans Benefits Advisor.

**Lynn Magistrale**, TSGT, USAF Retired, was inspired to join the Navy through a conversation in her senior year of high school in 1992. Lynn attended basic training in Orlando, Florida. Upon graduation, she was assigned to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island where she spent the next three years of her career.

As a certified Plane Captain in the Navy, Lynn documented and submitted aircraft maintenance records, and tracked maintenance plans for completeness while ensuring the operational integrity of all assigned aircraft. Lynn routinely conducted duties which included briefing aircrew on aircraft status, conducting pre-flight checks with aircrew, assisted with the safe launch and recovery of assigned aircraft on shore and onboard Navy aircraft carriers. She finished her active duty obligation and chose to go into the United States Navy Reserves in her hometown: Buffalo, New York. As a mother of two children, she chose to continue staying local and joined Niagara Falls Air Force Reserves at Niagara Falls Air Base in 2006 with a primary duty as Security Forces.

Of all the challenges she faced in the military, the most impactful was yet to come in 2008, when Lynn was called to serve as base security in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Lynn was away from her family for seven months. During this time, her duties included providing vital perimeter defense as a sentry in a guard tower, protecting more than 5,000 coalition and Department of Defense resources. During hostile fire incidents, which included small arms fire at the Entry Control Point and more than 18 rocket attacks to the interior of the base, she displayed exceptional leadership qualities through her swift and timely action, re-enforcing base perimeter defenses, ensuring the safety and security of fellow Security Force members and the base populace. Lynn routinely assisted in UXO sweeps, completing timely and accurate assessment of her sector while maintaining the integrity of the base. While she was deployed she completed the Combat Life Saving (CLS) course and received certification on the MRAP and ATV vehicle systems. Her contributions to the squadron greatly enhanced the unit's readiness and ensured mission success, resulting in her Unit being awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

In 2012, Lynn was diagnosed with uterine cancer. She still undergoes treatment at Roswell Park Cancer Institute. She spent many months struggling with denial and uncertainties of “why me?” In 2013, she was one month short to the day of being one-year cancer free. Following her fight with cancer, she was now faced with a new fight. Lynn was told in October 2013 that she now has MS. Spite her struggles she continued to stay strong and was nominated “inspirational woman of the year” through the Buffalo Wellness Center. In January 2015 her career was cut short with the Air Force due to MS, causing a spiral of downhill emotions. She finds herself going from the struggles of cancer, to MS, to the empowering will to now support and enrich the lives of fellow MS warriors.

Besides focusing her life on health and wellness, Lynn’s passion is now dedicated to helping her fellow Veterans. She works for WNYHeroes as a Program Director, working tirelessly making sure the needs of all Veterans are met. By helping Veterans maintain their dignity and dealing with the transitions and challenges life brings to our combat Veterans today, Lynn is able to continue serving her fellow brothers and sisters.

**Kim Diana Connolly** directs the experiential learning program at UB School of Law as the Vice Dean for Advocacy and Experiential Learning, and took the lead with the UB team in applying for the Justice for Heroes grant that led to the UB School of Law Veterans Law Practicum. She helps teach the experiential components of that course, along with her work on other access to justice issues through teaching additional clinics.

She served as a VISTA volunteer after graduating with an undergraduate chemistry degree from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and received her certification in non-profit management from Duke University while doing anti-poverty work for three years. She then studied law at Georgetown, and went into private practice in Washington, DC. She thereafter enrolled in a graduate law program at night while working so that she could apply to enter academic teaching. An inveterate student even after more than a dozen years with tenure, Professor Connolly has currently completed her graduate certification in Restorative Practices, and among other things, she has learned about how restorative justice serves the nation’s veterans through that program.

Professor Connolly is also the proud daughter of a U.S. Army veteran. She dreams of firmly establishing UB as a top place for veterans to become the attorneys of tomorrow and would love to create a veterans clinic that can help our local veterans and military for many years to come.

**John P. Herrion** is an attorney with extensive experience in disability rights.

In March 2008, John became Director of Disability Rights for the New York State Division of Human Rights. In this capacity he assists with enforcement of the New York State’s Human Rights Law provisions that prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Prior to working at the New York State Division of Human Rights, John was Counsel to the United Spinal Association for twelve years, where he represented and assisted persons with disabilities on a wide variety of issues relating to employment, housing and access to places of public accommodation.

John has published articles and lectured extensively, including Continuing Legal Education programs for attorneys, on the rights of persons with disabilities. He is a past Chair and Secretary of the New York City Bar Association's Committee on Legal Issues Affecting Persons with Disabilities.

John holds a law degree from Pace University School of Law, and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Manhattan College.

**Anthony Kuhn** is a Managing Partner at Tully Rinckey PLLC. As the Chair of Tully Rinckey PLLC's nationwide Military and National Security practice groups, Anthony supervises the training, performance, and daily operations of attorneys in both practice areas across the United States. As a military leader and trainer, having served more than 22 years in the U.S. Army and Army Reserve, Anthony brings decades of leadership training and experience to the Buffalo office. Anthony has previously served as a senior drill sergeant, a combat intelligence advisor to the New Iraqi Army, a master combatives instructor, and a first sergeant and acting commander of a combat engineer drill sergeant company. Anthony is currently serving in a brigade-level staff sergeant major position. Anthony has spent more than a decade training and supervising thousands of soldiers and officers across two different countries' Armed Forces.

As an attorney, Anthony focuses much of his time on the representation of military personnel, federal government employees and federal agents, as well as private employers and not for profit corporations. Anthony's practice areas include military law, national security representation, federal labor and employment law, Veterans' benefits and corporate law. Anthony has extensive experience assisting clients in navigating matters involving security clearance suspensions and revocations, Medical Evaluation Boards (MEB) and Physical Evaluation Boards (PEB), ROTC disenrollment, appeals to the Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military Records, UCMJ violations and non-judicial punishment, appeals for service-connection before the Department of Veterans Affairs, rebuttals to GOMORs and QMP selection notifications and requests for Special Selection Boards.

Anthony currently serves on the Board of Directors for multiple 501(C)(3) not-for-profit corporations. He has represented dozens of Veteran-owned businesses and currently serves as outside general counsel for many local organizations, including VFW and American Legion Posts. Anthony's experiences as a corporate attorney and the prior owner of a construction company have been instrumental in his ability to train, educate, and represent local businesses and business owners in matters involving private employment, business formations, contract review, articles of incorporation, bylaws, separation negotiations and many other business-related issues. He is a frequent presenter for the United States Small Business Administration and Boots to Business events.

As the Chair of the Military and National Security practice groups, Anthony regularly represents service members during security clearance hearings before the Defense Office of Hearing and Appeals (DOHA) and other federal agencies across the United States. He has recently secured clearance victories for individuals in Florida, Virginia, New York, and DC. He has assisted his clients in drafting written responses to clearance revocations and denials, as well as GOMOR rebuttals, QMP matters of mitigation and extenuation and Special Selection Board requests. Anthony has represented clients who were under investigation and successfully negotiated non-judicial punishment for many service-

members, including allegations of failed urinalyses, AWOL, shoplifting, sexual harassment and false official statements. Anthony has also negotiated the surrender of multiple deserters and has assisted with debt remission and waiver requests. Anthony has also successfully assisted multiple ROTC cadets in obtaining favorable resolution of disenrollment proceedings.

A combat Veteran, Anthony was deployed in 2004 and imbedded into the New Iraqi Army as a member of a nine-man advisor support team assigned to advise the commanding general of Iraq's first operation brigade throughout day-to-day training and combat operations. Temporarily attached to the First Marines in Fallujah, Anthony served as the intelligence advisor and .50 cal. gunner throughout Operation New Dawn. Anthony was later relocated to Tadj, Iraq to assist Special Operations Forces in training and sustaining the first plain clothes reconnaissance and surveillance teams in the New Iraqi Army. Anthony's teams were deployed throughout the Diyala Province for elections security and reconnaissance missions. While serving in Iraq, Anthony was awarded two Bronze Star Medals and the Combat Action Badge, among many other awards.

Upon returning home, Anthony quickly obtained the rank of first sergeant at the young age of 30. Shortly thereafter, Anthony served dual roles as both first sergeant and acting commander for more than a year. Anthony has been honored as the 2009 "WNY Army Reserve Soldier of the Year," January 2015 WNY Heroes "Hero of the Month," and is a recipient of the two Meritorious Service Medals, four Army Commendation Medals, 13 Army Achievement Medals and many other awards.

As a service-connected disabled combat Veteran, Anthony has refocused his work ethic toward building a practice dedicated to training, educating, and representing his fellow Veterans, Veteran-owned businesses, federal employees and local corporations. Anthony is partially responsible for the creation of, and currently serves as the Co-Director for, the University at Buffalo Law School's first Veterans Law Practicum. He serves on the nation's first military discharge upgrade advisory board and is a current member of the Erie County Bar Association's Committee on Veterans and Service-Members' Legal Issues.

**Alyssa Vasquez** is the Program Manager for the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support Program, in both Erie and Niagara County. She is also the proud mother of three children and is an Army Veteran.

Alyssa served in the Active Duty Army from October 2003 to March of 2017. While serving as a Geospatial Engineer, Alyssa deployed twice to Iraq, and once to Afghanistan, in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Additionally, she served as a Drill Sergeant in a Combat Engineer One Station Unit Training (OSUT) unit in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and also as both the Academics, and Quality Assurance, Noncommissioned Officer In Charge (NCOIC) for the U.S. Army S.E.R.E. (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape) School, in Fort Rucker, Alabama. Upon exiting the Military, Alyssa was hired as a Veteran Advocate, at the Veterans One-stop Center of WNY, Inc., and ultimately transitioned to the role of Program Manager in May of 2018.

**Matt Steele** is a staff attorney at Disability Rights New York's Rochester office. His practice focuses on disability law in employment, housing, and public accommodations throughout New York State. Prior to working at Disability Rights New York, Matt worked as a legal researcher for Thomson Reuters and as a civil rights compliance attorney for a large public housing authority.

**Coco Culhane** is the founder and director of the Veteran Advocacy Project at the Urban Justice Center. She is an adjunct professor of clinical law at Brooklyn Law School, where she teaches the Veterans' Rights Clinic. She sits on the New York State Discharge Upgrade Advisory Board, is a founding advisor to the NYC Veterans Alliance, is a member of the Veterans' Mental Health Coalition Advisory Board and has been on Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's Service Academy Selection Committee since 2014.

From 2011 to 2013, Coco was an Equal Justice Works Fellow sponsored by the CIGNA Foundation and Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP. She has presented on Veterans' legal issues and conducted trainings for attorneys, social workers, and students at conferences across the country. Culhane received a J.D. from Brooklyn Law School, where she was the symposium editor of the Brooklyn Law Review and president of the student health law association. Prior to law school she was an editor at The New Republic for six years. She received a B.A. in English from Wesleyan University.

**Braden K. Linn** is a Postdoctoral Fellow on the T32 Training grant at the Clinical and Research Institute on Addictions at the University at Buffalo School of Medicine. Braden is broadly interested in co-occurring psychopathology and alcohol use disorder. Specific projects focus on the relationship between posttraumatic stress disorder and alcohol use disorder in Veterans and the relationship between emotion regulation and substance use.

Braden's publications have appeared in the *Journal of Community Psychology*, *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, and *Military Behavioral Health*. A 2015 paper that was published in the *Journal of Veteran and Military Health* entitled "On working with Veterans: What social work and nursing students need to know" won a Best Paper award from Australasian Medical Society. Braden holds a PhD in Social Welfare and a Master of Social Work from the University at Buffalo, a Master of City and Metropolitan Planning from the University of Utah, and an undergraduate degree from Westminster College.

**Thomas H. Nochajski** is a Research Professor at the University at Buffalo School of Social Work, an Associate Research Scientist at the Clinical Research Institute on Addictions, as well as an Associate Research Scientist at the Center for Health and Social Research. His work focuses on aspects of prevention of alcohol and drug problems (primary, secondary, and tertiary), as well as the impact of trauma. Thomas has been a PI or Co-PI on a number of NIH-funded grants.

He has done work with criminal justice groups, including evaluation and study of the mechanisms of therapeutic courts. He also is involved with a study of chronically homeless women. Finally, he has worked on studies focused on Veteran issue, one study considered the impact on Veterans when they trained rescued dogs to allow for adoption, another considered how service providers would help

military families, and another that considered the needs expressed by Veterans. Thomas is also a combat Veteran.

**J. Paul Noonan** is presently serving as Coordinator of Veterans and Older Adult Services for the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). He has worked in NY State government since 1984, when he joined the former Division of Substance Abuse Services. He received his BA from Merrimack College in 1977 and his MA (1980) and MPA (1992) from the University at Albany. He also received his NYS Teaching Certification in Secondary Education in 1980.

**Tara J. Melish**, Professor of Law and Director of the Buffalo Human Rights Center at SUNY Buffalo Law School, teaches, writes and practices in the areas of human rights and public international law.

Active in advocacy and litigation initiatives before United Nations and Inter-American human rights bodies, she has worked as associate social affairs officer in the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as United Nations representative of Disability Rights International in the drafting negotiations of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as staff attorney at the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), researcher to the South African Land Claims Court and Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, and legal adviser or consultant to a range of national and international human rights organizations. A specialist in comparative approaches to the protection of socio-economic and cultural rights, she has given human rights training programs across the world, including in Argentina, Finland, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, Peru, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe, and has received professional fellowships and research awards from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Fulbright Foundation, and Yale Law School.

Tara sits on the faculty of the Global School on Socio-Economic Rights and has taught as a visiting professor at Notre Dame, Oxford, George Washington, Georgia, St. Thomas, and Virginia schools of law. She has written numerous books, articles, and chapters on economic, social and cultural rights, human rights enforcement strategies, disability rights, transitional justice, the inter-American human rights system, and participatory approaches to bridging the governance gaps in the business and human rights context.

Tara graduated *magna cum laude* from Brown University in 1996 and from Yale Law School in 2000, where she served as editor-in-chief of the *Yale Human Rights and Development Law Journal* and book reviews editor for the *Yale Journal of International Law*. Following graduation, she served as law clerk to the Honorable James R. Browning of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco.

**Judge Robert Russell** is an Associate Judge for Buffalo City Court and serves by appointment, as an Erie County Court Judge. Judge Russell has been presiding over Treatment Courts since December of 1995, having created during his tenure Buffalo's Drug Treatment Court, its Mental Health Treatment Court, and its Veterans Treatment Court.

In January of 2008, Judge Russell created and began presiding over the first Veterans' Treatment Court in the United States. His work in the Treatment Court field led to his induction into the "Hall of Fame"

of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, and the "Hall of Fame" of Justice for Vets. He is the recipient of the "2014 White House Advocates for Action Award", presented by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), and is the recipient of Awards of Merit from the American Bar Association, New York State Bar Association, and the Erie County Bar Association.

**Captain Art Cody**, USN (Retired) is the Deputy Director of the Veterans Defense Program of the New York State Defenders Association. He began his career as an Army helicopter pilot followed by a similar role in the US Navy Reserve flying for a Strike Rescue/Special Operations Squadron. He served aboard USS Enterprise (CVN-65) in the initial response to the 9-11 attacks and was most recently deployed to Afghanistan (2011-2012) as the Staff Director of the Rule of Law Section, US Embassy Kabul. In total, his active and reserve military career spans over thirty years.

As a civilian lawyer, he has represented criminal defendants for more than twenty years and is former chair of the Capital Punishment Committee of the New York City Bar Association. He frequently presents nationally on the defense of Veterans, provides counsel to lawyers for Veterans, particularly those under sentence of death, and recently served as lead counsel in a Veteran capital clemency hearing.

In addition to an Aerospace Engineering degree from West Point, he graduated *magna cum laude* from Notre Dame Law School where he was the Executive Editor of the *Notre Dame Law Review* and founded the Notre Dame Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. He is a recipient of the New York City Bar Association's Thurgood Marshall Award for Capital Representation, the Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Humanitarian Award for Lifetime Service, and the New York State Bar Association's 2019 David S. Michaels Award for his representation of Veterans in Criminal Courts. His military decorations include the Navy Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Naval Aviator Badge, Army Aviator Badge, Army Parachutist Badge and the German Armed Forces Parachutist Badge. Additionally, he received the State Department's Meritorious Honor Award for his service in Kabul.

**John Darcy** is employed by the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision and, since 2014, serves as the Guidance Specialist for Veterans' Affairs.

John has been with the Department since 2000, working in various positions. As the Veterans Affairs Guidance Specialist, he is responsible for coordinating and monitoring services within NYSDOCCS facilities and serves as the Department's Veterans' Services Liaison with other agencies. The Department currently has 2,300 Veterans in custody and 1,600 under Community Supervision and offers the Veterans Residential Therapeutic Program at Clinton Annex, Gouverneur, Groveland, and Mid-State Correctional Facilities.

John has represented New York State as a member of the National Institute of Corrections, Justice Involved Veterans Network (JIVN) since 2015. The JIVN meets bi-annually to discuss the state of affairs within the Veterans communities and share strategies to identify and develop innovative and holistic approaches to assist justice-involved Veterans.



DOCCS' goal is to provide a healing, peaceful environment in a correctional setting so the Veterans can address their service-related problems. John is passionate about the program and is a Veteran himself.

**Dr. Patrick Welch** started his military career at 17 when he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. While serving as an Infantry Squad Leader in Vietnam he was severely wounded in action and was hospitalized for two years recovering from his wounds. Patrick was an international hospitality industry executive for 48 years, has worked in over 50 countries and has been a CFO (Chief Financial Officer), COO (Chief Operating Officer), CEO (Chief Executive Officer) and owner of several businesses. He has served as Director of Veterans Services for Erie County, New York and as an Adjunct Professor at Daemen College.

In January 2008, Patrick became involved in the Buffalo Veterans Treatment court as one of the first Veteran Mentors in the country. In 2010, he founded The Center for Veterans and Veteran Family Services at Daemen College in Amherst, NY. Now retired, he concentrates his efforts working with Veterans involved in the criminal justice system with the Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court and Justice for Veterans.

His personal military awards include the Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, Good Conduct, National Defense, Vietnam Campaign, Vietnam Service and New York State Conspicuous Service Cross. He is a member of the New York State Veterans Hall of Fame and the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor. He is the recipient of numerous business, state and national awards for his work in the hospitality industry, Veteran's advocacy, academic and nonprofit sectors.

Patrick and his wife Carol have been married for 51 years and they have 4 daughters and 5 grandchildren.

**David Bentivegna** is a senior staff attorney at the Buffalo office of Prisoners' Legal Services of New York. David has been employed there for nearly a decade, working diligently to fulfill its mission of providing effective legal representation and assistance to indigent prisoners to preserve their civil and human rights. In that capacity David has worked to challenge the disciplinary confinement of inmates in solitary confinement based on the 8th Amendment's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment as well as on due process grounds. He has further worked to protect inmates' first amendment rights to free speech and advocated for prisoners receiving inadequate medical or mental health care. David has investigated the excessive use of force by staff, and developed expertise in jail time, sentence calculations and related parole matters. His clients have included Veterans who are incarcerated in New York State prisons.

David has a strong passion for public interest law and clerked with the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo throughout his years at law school, preparing briefs with their criminal appeals unit. David graduated with a bachelor's degree in history and philosophy from Canisius College in 2004 and received his J.D. from the University at Buffalo Law School in 2007.

**Derek Coy** serves as the Veterans' Health Officer at the New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth) where he focuses on expanding Veterans' access to community-based services and leveraging external funding to increase resources available to returning Veterans in New York State. For more than a decade, he has served as a thought leader, convener, and advocate to improve the health of returning Veterans and their families.

Prior to joining NYSHealth, Derek was a nonprofit consultant, where he used his experience in advocacy and the nonprofit sector to help clients diversify their fundraising efforts, modernize internal structures to adapt to changing environments, and reinforce their brands through targeted messaging and social media. Previously, Derek served in a variety of different roles at leading nonprofits, such as The Doe Fund, American Civil Liberties Union, and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

Derek has considerable experience working in the Veteran space and has used his passion and understanding of the community to advocate for changes in our nation's capital. He has appeared in numerous television, print, and radio outlets, including *CNN*, *NBC*, *ABC*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *SiriusXM Radio*. He is a regular contributor to *Task & Purpose*, and has had pieces shared by the Obama White House.

Derek received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Houston Clear Lake, and his Master of Middle Eastern History degree from the City College of New York, where he focused on 20th century Iran. He is also a former Sergeant in the United States Marine Corps and served a yearlong deployment to Iraq's Anbar Province in 2005, as well as another aboard the USS Essex in 2007. He currently resides in the Bronx.

**Benjamin Pomerance** is the Deputy Director for Program Development for the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs. In this role, he serves as the Deputy General Counsel for the agency, as well as working as the agency's Legislative Liaison and overseeing several of the Division's programming initiatives. His work focuses on advocacy and assistance for Veterans, Servicemembers, and their families on a wide range of federal and state issues.

Apart from his work for the Division, scholarly journals at Albany, Belmont, Delaware, Florida Coastal, Gonzaga, Hamline, Ohio Northern, Oregon, Marquette, Maryland, and Wyoming law schools have published or will soon publish Benjamin's articles on topics ranging from elder law to the federal judiciary to freedom of speech in post-revolutionary governments. He also contributed a chapter to an internationally published elder law anthology. The United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims has cited his written work, as have several books and legal journals.

His recent speaking engagements include panel discussions at the 2018 National Association of Consumer Advocates Convention, the 2017 international Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Conference, the international Law & Society Conference in 2015, 2016, and 2018, the International Elder Law & Policy Conference, and the International Conference on Contracts, as well as facilitating programs in every region of New York State regarding benefits, programs, and services for Veterans and their families.

Benjamin graduated as the salutatorian of his class from Albany Law School in 2013. While at Albany Law, he founded and directed the school's Veterans' Rights Pro Bono Project, for which he received the "President's Pro Bono Service Award" from the New York State Bar Association. He served as the Executive Editor for Symposium for the *Albany Law Review*, led the school's student chapter of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, and published a report about human rights concerns confronting America's aging prison population as an Edgar & Margaret Sandman Fellow with the Government Law Center.

Apart from his work in the law, Benjamin is an avid arts journalist with more than 500 published articles, a pursuit for which he has received first-place awards in feature writing from the New York State Press Association.