

# MARIA'S LIST

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DEMOCRACY & EDUCATION

## Historic Election of the First Afro-Latina to the Boston City Council

In an historic and closely contested election, [Julia Mejia](#) became the first Afro-Latina City Councilor in Boston's 200-year history. Mejia and her team ran an aggressive grassroots campaign that relied heavily on volunteers and grassroots donors. A Dorchester native, Mejia's victory was a result of high turnout in communities of color, as well as first-time voters of color. The communities of Hyde Park and Roxbury saw a 1000 vote increase from the previous non-mayoral [election cycle of 2015](#). Mission Hill, Jamaica Plain, East Boston and Dorchester each [saw over 900 new voters in each Ward](#).

The 2019 Boston City [Council election](#) had [a historic number of women and people of color vying](#) for a seat on the Council. Neighborhoods such as Mattapan, Roxbury, Mission Hill, and Dorchester saw both competitive District and At-Large races, with candidates of color running relational movement-building campaigns. This electorate was equally engaged in the 2018 primary season that saw the movement campaigns of now District Attorney Rachael Rollins and Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley driven by the priorities and actions of communities of color.



Both Mejia and St. Guillen ran strong campaigns to fill the At-Large seat and become the first Latina elected to the City Council. The November general election vote total was so close that it required an [unprecedented recount](#). Both candidates and their teams were charged with collecting 50 signatures from each ward to trigger a recount process. The recount itself was a three day process in which hundreds of pre-trained volunteers supervised the ballot counting. In the end, [Councilor Mejia was victorious, with a final vote tally of 22,492 for Mejia and 22,491 for St. Guillen](#).

This 2019 election cycle represented a [local deep democracy](#) win for Mejia and other women of color. Boston City Councilors [Michelle Wu](#) and [Kim Janey](#), combined with challengers [Alejandra St. Guillen](#) and Mejia, raised over \$835,000 in total to fuel their [movement building campaigns](#). These candidates successfully challenged the traditional narrative that women of color lack electoral viability due to electoral fundraising. Additionally, each of their campaigns were run by women of color. Councilor

Wu, Councilor Mejia, and St. Guillen all employed Latinas to manage their respective races. Councilor Janey's re-election campaign was led by the only black woman campaign manager in Boston during the 2019 cycle.

Critically, deep democracy is about centering communities of color, and folks who have been purposefully excluded from traditional politics. For these women of color campaigns to be led themselves by women of color only deepens the city's collective bench moving forward.

Now in 2020, Councillor Mejia has become a leading advocate for Black, Latino, and Asian American communities. She [used her maiden speech to advocate for sanctuary spaces in the city of Boston](#), and since the beginning of the pandemic has been a [bold voice for investing in businesses in communities of color](#). Outside of the chamber, Councilor Mejia continues to be an [activist leader who utilizes her online platform to convene young people](#) and communities of color, [as well as give a human face to the work of government](#).