

## **YWCA New York City Honors Inspiring Women at 10th Annual Summer Soiree**

**New York, NY (June 24, 2014)** – On Friday, June 20, 2014, the YWCA of the City of New York honored Vanessa Bush, Aja Monet and Reshma Saujani at its annual Summer Soiree to celebrate their professional accomplishments and contributions to their respective sectors. The Summer Soiree is one of the YWCA of the City of New York’s signature annual events. Conceived to promote engagement between female senior executives and young women new to the workforce, the evening offers unique opportunities to build support networks and optimize career advancement potential.

The highlight of the evening was a presentation of three coveted awards to the soiree honorees, as follows:

**The “W” Award** was presented to **Vanessa K. Bush**. Presented annually, this award is the evening’s highest honor. The “W” Award commemorates a company and/or individual that is a visionary, innovator and trendsetter and embodies the spirit of the YWCA of the City of New York.

**The Community Award** was presented to **Reshma Saujani**. This award honors a woman who has dedicated her work to the progress of a civil issue involving girls and/or women.

**The One to Watch Award** was presented to **Aja Monet**. In its inaugural year, this award honors a woman under the age of 30 that exemplifies the mission of the YWCA of New York City.

“We are delighted to honor these women who have dared to follow their passion and talents to truly make a difference in the world,” stated Dr. Danielle Moss-Lee, president and CEO of the YWCA of New York City. “It is the YWCA’s mission to, among many other goals, provide a forum for women to help women. The Summer Soiree is a carefully crafted evening where young women can meet and be inspired by our honorees, while expanding their possibilities as well as their networks.”

**Vanessa K. Bush** is a 20-year veteran of the magazine industry, and is currently Editor in Chief at Essence Magazine. Prior to this position, she was the Executive Editor at Essence, and served as Digital Editorial Manager of Food/Lifestyle Content at General Mills. She has held various editorial posts at Essence, Life and Glamour magazines.

Vanessa co-authored a best-selling beauty and empowerment book with model, entrepreneur and media icon Tyra Banks, *Tyra’s Beauty Inside & Out*, and is a past winner of a Merrill Journalism Fellowship in Child and Family Policy. She has also served as a contributor at Kaboose.com, a parenting and lifestyle web site. A foodie, Vanessa holds a culinary degree from the Natural Gourmet Institute for Health and Culinary Arts in New York City, and is a graduate of Harvard University and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

**Reshma Saujani** is the Founder and CEO of Girls Who Code, a national non-profit organization working to close the gender gap in technology and prepare young women for jobs of the future. In her groundbreaking new book, *Women Who Don’t Wait in Line*, Reshma advocates for

a new model of female leadership focused on embracing risk and failure, promoting mentorship and sponsorship, and boldly charting your own course -- personally and professionally.

After years of working as an attorney and supporting the Democratic party as an activist and fundraiser, Reshma left her private sector career behind and became the first Indian American woman in the country to run for US Congress. Following the race, Reshma became Deputy Public Advocate of New York City and ran a campaign for creating educational and economic opportunities for women and girls, immigrants, and those who have been sidelined in the political process.

Reshma is a graduate of the University of Illinois, Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and Yale Law School. She has recently been named one of Forbes' Most Powerful Women Changing the World, Fast Company's 100 Most Creative People, Ad Age's Creativity 50, among many additional honors.

**Aja Monet** is the youngest winner of the legendary Nuyorican Poet's Cafe Grand Slam. Using poetry as a holistic healing tool to empower and encourage youth development in education she has performed, lectured, and taught around the world including the United Nations, Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, and Paradiso.

Born and raised in East New York, Brooklyn Aja received a BA from Sarah Lawrence College and an MFA in Creative Writing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She released her album *Scared to Make Love/Scared Not To* and published her book *The Black Unicorn Sing* as well as collaborated with poet Saul Williams on *Chorus: A Literary Mixtape* (Simon & Schuster). She is currently a Resident Teaching Artist with Peapod Adobe Youth Voices Academy in New York City and working on new music and a book of poems to be released later this year

To learn more about the YWCA of New York City please visit [www.ywcanyc.org](http://www.ywcanyc.org). YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

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