

## ***Carol Robles-Román, Latina Champion for Justice, Dies at 60***

As a New York City deputy mayor and a lawyer for the city and state court systems, she fought for equal access and opportunity for women, immigrants and minorities.



Carol Robles-Román in 2001 after being appointed deputy mayor in the Bloomberg administration. Justice Sonia Sotomayor of the Supreme Court called her “a dynamo her entire life.” Credit...Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

By [Sam Roberts](#) Aug. 24, 2023

Carol Robles-Román, who advanced the causes of equal opportunity and social justice for women, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities through leading roles as a Latina in city government, the courts and higher education in New York, died on Sunday in White Plains, N.Y. She was 60.

Her death, in a hospital, was caused by lung cancer, her sister Frances Robles said.

As counsel to Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg for three terms and as a deputy mayor, Ms. Robles-Román was instrumental in establishing the Family Justice Centers, which provide services for victims of domestic and gender-based violence, and in [broadening the pool](#) of mayoral appointments to judgeships on the Family, Civil and Criminal Courts.

As a ranking woman and Latina in the Bloomberg administration, she was also the first person appointed to the newly-established position of deputy mayor for legal affairs. And from 2002 to 2016, she had been a trustee of the City University of New York.

After her 12-year stint in city government, Ms. Robles-Román was chief executive of the Women’s Legal Defense Fund and of the Equal Rights Amendment/Fund for Women’s Equality. In 2019, she was named general counsel and dean of the faculty of Hunter College.

“Carol Robles was a dynamo her entire life,” Justice Sonia Sotomayor of the United States Supreme Court said in a statement, adding, “She devoted herself to public service and made a noteworthy difference both in the lives of Latinos and all New Yorkers.”

Ms. Robles-Román had prepped Mayor Bloomberg and accompanied him when he testified in behalf of Justice Sotomayor’s nomination to the Supreme Court in 2009.

In his own statement, Mr. Bloomberg said Ms. Robles-Román had “helped spearhead groundbreaking work to make the city more accessible to our immigrant and disabled communities, and to stop domestic violence and human trafficking.”

As a deputy mayor and counsel, she helped make the city’s administrative tribunals more accessible to the public and helped launch the city’s [Latin Media and Entertainment Commission](#), with the aim of expanding Latino productions as well as media business and job opportunities for Hispanic New Yorkers.

Ms. Robles-Román gravitated to the judicial system right out of law school at [New York University](#). She served as a senior attorney to a Family Court judge, as special counsel for the state’s Unified Court System, where she worked for the state’s chief administrative judge. Her mission included rooting out bias in the judicial process.

She was also an assistant state attorney general in the Civil Rights Bureau and was general counsel of the [Puerto Rico Industrial Development Corp.](#), a public economic development operation based in San Juan.

“Her legacy was that she was someone who above all believed in and fought for equal justice and fairness,” Jonathan Lippman, the state’s former chief administrative judge, said in an email.

Carol Ann Robles was born on Aug. 27, 1962, in the East New York section of Brooklyn. She was the third of six children of Emilio and Ines Robles, a couple who came from Naranjito, P.R. They owned a travel agency.

When Carol was in the fifth grade, the family moved from Brooklyn to Howard Beach, Queens, after spending a year in Puerto Rico. Following graduation from Stella Maris High School in Queens, she earned a bachelor’s degree in political science and media studies from Fordham University in 1983.

At Fordham, she had met [Nelson S. Román](#); she asked to borrow his notes in an international law class because she was having difficulty understanding the professor’s Russian accent.

“I told her that I had taken the professor a year earlier and that with the notes, she should do well,” he said. “She got an A. I got a B+.”

She received her law degree in 1989. He went on to become a police officer, study law and win an appointment to the federal bench, sitting in the Southern District of New York in White Plains. They married in 1991.

In addition to Judge Román and her sister Frances, a correspondent for The New York Times, Ms. Robles-Román is survived by two children, Ariana and Andrés, and three other sisters, Edna, Sally and Melisa Robles.

When Ms. Robles-Román was told in 2017 that she had lung cancer, her sister Frances said, she vowed to defy the prognosis long enough to get her son into college. (Her daughter, Ariana, graduated from Georgetown University during the coronavirus pandemic.)

Ms. Robles-Román died on the day Andrés and his fellow freshmen were scheduled to move onto campus to begin their first year at Yale.