

# Vanessa O'Brien

*recognised by State of New York  
for legislating 29th May as Mt Everest Day*

It's not every day that one of our Explorers and Honorary Advisory Board members writes into law **A DAY**, but that is what Vanessa O'Brien (who summited Mt Everest in 2012), along with the Sherpa from US Nepal Climbers Association did, as they celebrated **Mt Everest Day** on 2nd October at The Sheen Center in New York City.

To execute this vision, they found an ideal partner in New York State's first South Asian American Assemblywoman, Jenifer Rajkumar, a civil rights attorney, who represents District 38 (which includes the Borough of Queens), where most Sherpa live and work. Assemblywoman Rajkumar loved the idea of Mt Everest Day and put forth the motion to the New York State Assembly where it was passed. Today, New York State recognises 29th May as Mt Everest Day.

200 people gathered to celebrate this victory, which included live performances from dancers and musicians. Peter Hillary and Norbu Tenzing sent pre-recorded video, while Vanessa and Passang Sherpa, President of US Nepal Climbing Association, spoke at the event. Vanessa said *"Mt Everest Day represents what an individual can hope to achieve – the pinnacle; the ability to get to the top – the summit of the mountain in our lives, but at the same time Mt Everest Day reminds us of what we stand to lose to climate change, environmental degradation, and pollution."*

Asked how Mt Everest Day was different to Earth Day, Vanessa said *"Earth Day occurs on a date most people can't remember and is also just about environmental protection. Mt Everest Day, however, is a memorable date in history, because it represents man's struggle to figure out a way to the top of the highest mountain. It is celebrated worldwide, occurs on a known date, includes an element of success, and it is a reminder for us to look after what we care about, as mountain glaciers are melting at an alarming rate. The beautiful snow-capped mountains we see now, will not be there in 30 years."*

Assemblywoman Rajkumar recognised the accomplishments of over 40 Sherpa present by awarding citations at the event. Other guest speakers included

Kashish Das Shrestha (National Geographic photographer), Kami Rita and Apa Sherpa (Mt Everest summit recordholders via video), and Bishnu Prasad Gautam (Acting Nepal Consul General).

Dignitaries and distinguished guests included Michal Mlynar (H.E. Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations), and his wife, and Dr Andrea Mlynarova, Gale Brewer (Manhattan Borough Deputy President), Rhonda Binda (Queens Borough Deputy President), Dr Sima Karetnaya (US Ambassador of Health to the United Nations), and Dileep Kumar Thankaapan (Secretary General of the United Nations World Religious Committee).



L-R Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar and Vanessa O'Brien  
(photo by US Nepal Climbers Association)

Vintage video was shown from the Pathé archives surrounding the first ascent of Mt Everest as surprising footage from many illustrious individuals who had visited Nepal.

The event was sponsored by US Nepal Climbers Association, Proskauer Rose, and ArcTeryx Soho. This event calls to mind the 70th Anniversary of the first ascent of Mt Everest by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, which will occur on 29th May 2023.

Namaste