



# Captain Zeita Merchant

## Commander, Sector New York Captain of the Port United States Coast Guard



Captain Zeita Merchant assumed command in May 2021, and directs all Coast Guard missions in the Port of New York and New Jersey. She is responsible for ensuring the safety and security of one of the Nation's busiest and most economically important port complexes. Sector New York's area of responsibility spans over 6,000 square miles from 200 miles offshore and inland to Albany, NY, and includes facilities and waterways moving hundreds of billions of dollars in cargo and tens of millions of passengers annually. Prior to joining Sector New York as Deputy Sector Commander in 2020, Captain Merchant was a National Security Fellow at Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

Enjoying over 26 years of active-duty service, Captain Merchant is a recognized authority in maritime safety and security, and crisis management. She has served in a variety of assignments at the operational and executive levels and has been certified as one of the Coast Guard's top Emergency Managers leading large-scale, multi-jurisdictional incident responses across the Nation.

In July 2023, Captain Merchant was selected for nomination to the rank of Rear Admiral, becoming the first African American woman to earn this achievement in the service's history.

Her operational assignments include commanding maritime operations across the southern tip of Lake Michigan at Marine Safety Unit Chicago. She also directed operations as the Executive Officer of Marine Safety Unit Texas City, Chief of Port Operations at Sector Miami and as a Marine Inspector and Port Operations Officer at Marine Safety Office New Orleans.

Her previous staff assignments include serving as the Special Assistant to the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> Vice Commandants of the Coast Guard, Congressional Fellow on the Committee of Oversight and Reform and Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and Executive Strategic Planner for Coast Guard Flag and Senior Executive Service Corps.

Captain Merchant holds a Doctorate of Business Administration and Master of Quality Systems Management from the National Graduate School at New England Institute of Business, as well as a Master of Public Administration from George Washington University and a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Tougaloo College. In addition, she is a graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government's Executive Education Leadership in Homeland Security Course and a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Seminar XXI National Security and Foreign Affairs Fellow.

She has been honored with numerous professional, academic, and community service awards, including the 2023 Conference of Minority Transportation Officials' Women Who Move the Nation Award, the 2023 BEYA Stars and Stripes STEM Award, the 2022 Sailing for Scholars Founders Award, the New York City's 2021 Women in Service Award, 2019 Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration Outstanding Achievement in Public Service, 2018 Chicago Federal Executive Board J.F. Kennedy Leadership Award, 2018 US Coast Guard Captain Jarvis Inspirational Leadership Award, and many more. Her personal military awards include three Meritorious Service Medals, six Coast Guard Commendation Medals, three Coast Guard Achievement Medals, three Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medals, and four Commandant's Letters of Commendation, Marine Safety Insignia and Commandant's Staff Identification Badge.