

CHRO 2015 LEADERS AND LEGENDS AWARDS

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities is proud to announce the winners of the 2015 Leaders and Legends Awards. These awards will be presented to six of Connecticut's civil rights leaders and legends who have been nominated by members of the community. Each award celebrates diversity and inclusion in different categories.

THE ALVIN W. PENN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP

Senator Eric Coleman will be awarded the Alvin W. Penn Award for Excellence in Leadership. As a state official from Connecticut, Senator Coleman embodies the leadership qualities of Alvin Penn, an African American state senator from Bridgeport, who fought tirelessly for the city, the urban poor and for African Americans across the state. Alvin Penn is best known for legislation that mandates the collection of traffic stop data in an effort to deter racial profiling in the state.

THE KATHARINE HEPBURN AWARD FOR USING MEDIA AS A PLATFORM FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The Artists Collective, Inc. will be awarded the Katharine Hepburn Award for Using Media as a Platform for Social Change. The award is named after Katharine Hepburn, an American actress from Old Saybrook, Connecticut. She is known for appearing in films and for breaking down traditional gender roles of women in popular culture. The Artists Collective is the recipient of this award for using art to bring about positive social change.

THE CONSTANCE BAKER MOTLEY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS OR LAW

Karen DeMeola will be awarded the Constance Baker Motley Award for Excellence in Business or Law. Ms. DeMeola is an attorney who is distinguished in her field for promoting equality and fairness. Constance Baker Motley was an African American civil rights activist, lawyer, judge, and state senator. She was the first female African American federal judge.

THE MARIA COLON SANCHEZ AWARD FOR COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

Michelle Duprey will be awarded the Maria Colon Sanchez Award for Community Activism. Ms. Duprey is dedicated to her community and exhibits the spirits and grassroots organizational skills that promote diversity and inclusion. Maria Colon Sanchez was an activist and politician who, in 1988, became the first Hispanic woman elected to the Connecticut General Assembly. She founded the Puerto Rican Parade Committee in 1964 and also, co-founded La Casa de Puerto Rico, the Society of Legal Services, the Spanish-American Merchants Association, the Puerto Rican Businessmen Association, and the Community Renewal Team.

THE EDYTHE J. GAINES AWARD FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Darryl C. Burke will be awarded the Edythe J. Gaines Award for Inclusive Education. Edythe Gaines was the first African American and first woman to head the Hartford school system. Her career began in New York City. She was the youngest principal in the history of the New York City School system and its first African American principal. In 1960 she became District Superintendent of Schools, Community School District 12 in the Bronx. After her tenure as Superintendent, she became a Commissioner at the Department of Public Utility Control in CT. Mr. Burke dedicated his career to promoting equality, inclusion and fairness in education serving as Vice Principal in at least two Hartford Public Schools and mentoring and serving as a role model for several generations of students.

THE MARIO AND JANET VIGEZZI AWARD FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Eleanor Kaplan will be awarded the Mario and Janet Vigezzi Award for Social Justice. Ms. Kaplan advocates for social justice and equality through her work. Mario Vigezzi worked for the CHRO for twenty five years and was the chief of field operations. He fought for equality and for the rights of brass workers. He was a member of many organizations including the NAACP and AFSCME. Janet Vigezzi was employed as a stockbroker and in the urban planning field. She was a member and officer of the North End Community Club of Waterbury, the Waterbury NAACP, League of Women Voters, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Ellis Island Foundation. She was also the treasurer of the Northwest Connecticut Emergency Medical Services Council. Both were advocates for social justice and equality. Eleanor Kaplan has been a champion of civil rights and continued her involvement in the civil rights movement long after her retirement from the CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities

The Leaders and Legends Awards Ceremony will be held of July 30 from 3-5pm in the Old Judiciary Room at the Connecticut State Capitol