

THE 9th ANNUAL BEACON OF LIGHT AWARDS

February 26, 2016



Presented by
Santa Clara County
Office of Immigrant Relations

AWARDEES: Richard Konda, Lynette Parker, Fred Hirsch, Robert Yabes, & Michelle Cordova



THE BEACON OF LIGHT AWARDS

The Beacon of Light Awards are given out annually to honor individuals and organizations for their outstanding work in improving the lives of immigrants in Santa Clara County. We are pleased to recognize the contributions of 2016 award recipients.



RICHARD KONDA

The Cindy Avitia Award for Lifetime Commitment

For several decades, Richard Konda has worked on many civil and immigrant rights issues. In the 1980's, he was an active participant in the movement to obtain redress and reparations for Japanese

Americans interned by the U.S. government during World War II. In response to the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, he, along with other immigrant rights activists and advocates, formed an ad-hoc coalition under the name Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Services (NIRRS), which was instrumental to statewide campaigns against anti-immigrant legislation and ballot initiatives. Later, NIRRS became Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN) where Richard served as President of the Board until 2013. In 1994, he was highly involved in the campaign against Proposition 187. After the tragic shooting of Bich Cau Tran in 2003, Richard, along with other advocates and organizations, formed the Coalition for Justice and Accountability (CJA) to actively work on reforms in police practices. Recently, he has been working to initiate reforms in the Santa Clara County jail system after the tragic death of inmate Michael Tyree. Richard Konda has contributed to growing a robust and effective civil and immigrant rights movement in Santa Clara County. In many years of service to the community, as a founder and executive director of Asian Law Alliance, Richard has served hundreds of thousands of refugees and immigrants in helping them to adjust their status, become U.S. Citizens, reunite with their family members, get access to benefits, find a way to escape their abusers, obtain decent housing, and improve their lives by knowing their rights and responsibilities under the law. Richard has been a valuable resource to the community in providing compassionate legal services and pushing for community involvement to affect changes that would create a more just system.

LYNETTE PARKER

The Cindy Avitia Award for Lifetime Commitment



Professor Lynette Parker is a nationally recognized expert in cases of political asylum, protection from domestic violence under VAWA (the Violence Against Women Act) and human trafficking. In particular, her work with survivors of human trafficking has led to her collaboration with numerous local organizations to provide comprehensive and coordinated relief to her clients, including counseling, housing, and legal support, among other services.

During her tenure at Santa Clara University's Katharine & George Alexander Community Law Center, Professor Parker has provided immigration legal advice and representation to hundreds of low-income County residents and others living in neighboring areas while mentoring countless students in the practice of immigration law. Professor Parker's hands-on courses allow her students to immediately apply their knowledge to assist Alexander Community Law Center's clients. During our most recent fiscal year, her students logged 3,232 volunteer hours rendering legal services whose market value reached nearly half-million dollars – all free of charge to Ms. Parker's clients. Through her work with many partnering organizations, she was instrumental in the establishment of the South Bay Coalition to End Human Trafficking (SBCEHT) in 2005. In 2009, 2011 and 2015, under Professor Parker's leadership, the Community Law Center and its SBCEHT partnering organizations obtained three grants from the U.S. Department of Justice to better serve survivors of human trafficking. More recently, SBCEHT selected Professor Parker to serve as one of its two representatives on the County Human Trafficking Commission, chaired by Supervisor Cindy Chavez, District Attorney Jeff Rosen and Sheriff Laurie Smith. Since 2006, law enforcement and the SBCEHT have identified and assisted over 300 victims of human trafficking in the South Bay. In collaboration with the Santa Clara County Office of Women's Policy, Professor Parker and SBCEHT have trained thousands of first respondents, teachers, health-clinic workers and social services staff, among others, on identifying the tell-tale signs of domestic violence and human trafficking. Through the years, Professor Parker has contributed to the education of hundreds of law students who have become attorneys of competence, conscience and compassion – values that she takes to new heights every day in the service of immigrant community.



ROBERT YABES

For Innovation in Immigrant Programs and Services

Robert Yabes has worked tirelessly for the past 25 years to protect immigrant rights. He is well known for his ability to unite communities. Robert is cofounder of the South Bay Legal Immigration Services Network. He has also worked to educate the Filipino community about immigration remedies that became available to victims of the 2013 super typhoon Haiyan and advocated for granting a temporary protected status to this group. He has led the Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services team through a media campaign to educate people about new immigration benefits and warn the community against unscrupulous practitioners. In 2012, when the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was implemented, Robert spearheaded the Catholic Charities team efforts to reach out to people who qualified for the program. Robert's awe-inspiring passion to help the marginalized low-income members of our community has influenced many colleagues, clients, and volunteers. In 2013, he has lead the Catholic Charities team to successfully complete the Voter's Registration and Education Project by doing presentations in Christian churches, mosques, and other places of worship. Robert has also travelled to high schools and to various senior centers encouraging the young and the young at heart to register to vote, educating them about the importance of becoming U.S. citizens, and exercising their right to vote.

FRED HIRSCH

For a Lifetime of Labor Rights Activism



Fred Hirsch has been a social activist for 60 years. He marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and César Chávez. Fred is particularly well known in the Chicano community, where he founded and served as Secretary of the Law and Police Committee of the Model Cities Program. He also served as Co-Chairman of the Santa Clara Valley Friends of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and participated in the Mississippi Freedom Summer project to help register African American voters in Mississippi. Fred also played a crucial role in the Angela Davis' trial. In recent years, Fred Hirsch has become most involved in the movement for comprehensive immigration reform. He has been a key figure in mobilizing local labor unions to back the organizing, lobbying, and protest marches to stop deportations and the breaking up of immigrant families, and in support of a humane pathway to legalization. Since 2006, Fred has been an organizer of the May First marches which seek to unify immigrants and workers around the historical and current contributions of immigrant workers to the building of the United States of America. In recent months, when young people mobilized in San José to assert that "Black lives matter" and "Brown lives matter", Fred Hirsch was there for the starting and ending rallies even when he could no longer walk with the march. He has remained a ubiquitous beacon of social justice for immigrant and underprivileged communities in Santa Clara County for over a half century.

MICHELLE CORDOVA

Beacon of Light for the Arts and Education

Michelle Córdoba is an outstanding advocate for immigrants rights. As an immigrant from Latin America herself, she is proud of her heritage, community, and culture. In addition to her professional activities, Ms. Córdoba has an extensive record of volunteer activities, and a record of success in building awareness of the diversity. Most importantly, she emphasizes the shared interests of various local immigrant communities. As the serving President and Director of the San Jose Peace and Justice Center, Michelle has each year directed the training of student interns from SJSU, DeAnza, and San Jose City College to provide free assistance to local immigrant families in need of DACA, alternative visas, and asylum. Hundreds of local immigrant families have been touched by these services over the past 5 years. Furthermore, she helped to train more than 50 student interns per year in immigration reform efforts, immigration legal services, and community organizing. Michelle continues this work as a member of the funded Administrative Relief Coalition that is currently charged with protecting immigrant rights and connecting local immigrant families with available legal services so they can work and reside in the county without fear of deportation. Michelle has helped to internationalize and expand the discourse and aims of the San Jose Peace Center to include the struggles of immigrant populations into the consciousness of local communities. She has also initiated the Latin Film series and continues to work with local immigrant organizations to tap into the power of art expressions in order to change the hearts and minds of many. As a member of the Multicultural Art Leadership Institute at the Mexican Heritage Plaza, Michelle continues to serve immigrant communities by bringing forward multiple art projects.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

Performances by

Viet Entertainment Group & Shabbal AlSudan



5:30-6:00 PM

Networking, refreshments

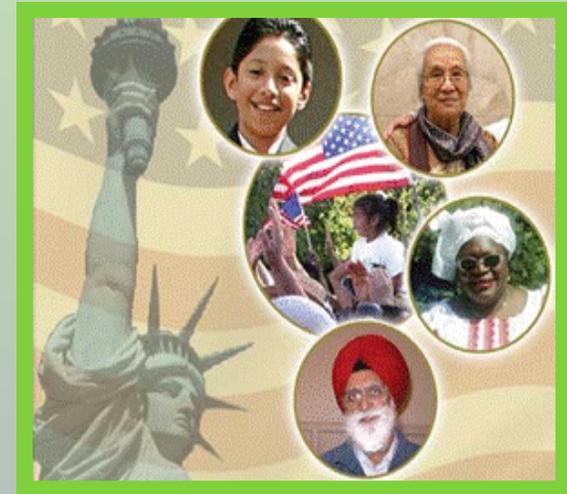
**6:00-7:20 PM Presentation
of awards combined with
performances**

7:30 PM Closing



THE 2016 BEACON OF LIGHT AWARDS

The United States has a deep-rooted history as a nation of immigrants. The County of Santa Clara's Office of Immigrant Relations acknowledges that Silicon Valley's success as an economic leader of the world is to a great extent the result of the hard work of immigrants. Immigrants have contributed countless hours of work, their own capital and ingenuity to help make this region globally recognized. The Statue of Liberty has long been welcoming numerous immigrant communities. The Beacon of Light Awards are given as a symbol of the torch that is held by the Statue of Liberty. The light is a reflection of the hopes and the dreams of immigrants for a bright beginning in a new country.



The mission of the Office of Immigrant Relations (OIR) is to:

- Provide on-going analysis of local impacts and to ensure effective planning in response to various forms of immigration reform
- Promote effective coordination of services to facilitate full inclusion of immigrants and immigrant communities
- Identify, promote, and apply best practices leading to effective immigrant integration
- Provide research and analysis of existing and emerging immigrant community needs, and to
- Heighten community awareness of immigrant contributions.

Maria Love, OIR Manager

Teresa Castellanos

Milina Jovanovic

Jessie Ferguson

David Acevedo