



MEDIA RELEASE

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District Community Leaders are Celebrated During Human Rights Month

Lauren Taylor, Three Emerging Leaders, and the Atlas Performing Arts Center-City at Peace Program to be Honored at the 12th Annual Human Rights Awards Gala

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – Today, the DC Commission on Human Rights (COHR) and the DC Office of Human Rights (OHR) name Lauren Taylor, the Founder and Director of Defend Yourself, as the recipient of the 2022 Cornelius R. “Neil” Alexander Humanitarian Award. The Award will be presented at the annual Human Rights Awards Gala this evening. The Award is named in honor of the longtime Chief Administrative Law Judge of the District's Commission on Human Rights. Additionally, COHR and OHR will give the Emerging Leader Award to three awardees: Addison Rose, David Burick, and Taylor Dumpson. Lastly, COHR and OHR will also award a new Community Award to The Atlas Performing Arts Center - City at Peace Program. The theme of this year’s Gala is “Celebrating Exceptional Leadership at the Crossroads of Gender and Human Rights.” The Gala is held each December to commemorate the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Lauren R. Taylor is a lifelong Washingtonian who has been working to end gender-based violence since 1978, when she co-founded D.C.’s first shelter for abused women and their children (My Sister’s Place) and helped organize D.C.’s first March to Stop Violence Against Women. As an activist and trainer, she’s taught empowerment self-defense since 1987. Lauren founded Defend Yourself in 1997, and with the organization, she’s trained more than 35,000 people in the D.C. area in skills to stop harassment, abuse, and assault. The Defend Yourself classes are specialized for women, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ people, and survivors of abuse and assault. Lauren comments: "Teaching people the skills to resist gender-based violence, transform their lives, and change the world is my passion. I'm thrilled to be honored for this work."

The “Emerging Leader Award,” recognizes rising human rights leaders aged 30 years or younger, who exhibit extraordinary leadership in human rights awareness raising through advocacy, the arts, education, networking, outreach, or other similar activities. The COHR and OHR are excited to announce the three award recipients this year:

Addison Rose is a DC high school senior and the current Youth Mayor of DC. One of her initiatives as Youth Mayor has been to conduct monthly town halls with DC youth to learn more about the prevalent issues and figure out ways to combat them. Addison is also the Eastern Region Teen President of Jack and Jill of America, was the founder of the Black Student Union at her previous school, and spoke at both the 58th Anniversary of the March on Washington and the March for Our Lives rally this fall.

David Burick is a Securities Regulation attorney at Freddie Mac. David was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome as a child and his journey navigating this condition grew into neurodiversity and disability advocacy and education in professional and personal settings. Additionally, he volunteers his legal services with Whitman-Walker Health’s Name and Gender Change Clinic and serves on the DEI Executive Committee of the American Bar Association Business Law Section. David hopes his work will advance equity and inclusion for neurodiverse, disabled, LGBTQ+, and other marginalized communities.

Taylor A. Dumpson is a nationally recognized anti-hate advocate and Associate Counsel at the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Taylor is the plaintiff in *Dumpson v. Ade*, a civil rights lawsuit filed after she was the target of a racially-motivated hate crime and subsequent cyber-harassment by neo-Nazis. Today, Ms. Dumpson continues to raise awareness about the impact of hate and discrimination on our communities, and she has been recognized as a “Uniter” by President Biden for her work to actively combat it.

New in 2022, the Community Award goes to a DC organization that provides outstanding services to support the human rights of DC residents, workers, or visitors. The inaugural award goes to the City at Peace Program at the Atlas Performing Arts Center.

The Atlas Performing Arts Center - City at Peace Program (CAP) is a youth development program, which provides a safe, collaborative, and nurturing space for young people to examine systems of oppression that marginalize people based on race, gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, and values. Rooted in social justice, City at Peace uses performing arts as a learning tool to develop skills in dance, theatre, voice, and stage production, as well as skills in conflict resolution, personal storytelling, empathy, understanding, and leadership. CAP offers: “If we allow one oppression, we allow them all. If we allow one person’s journey through life to be marginalized, belittled, dismissed, targeted, defined or weighed unequally by someone else, we must all be prepared to suffer the same injustice.”

Motoko Aizawa, Chair of the DC Commission on Human Rights, says: “We would like to acknowledge and show gratitude to the community for submitting so many wonderful nominations for the awards. There is so much great work being done in our community and we are looking forward to showing our appreciation at the Gala on December 6th.”

Hnin Khaing, Acting Director of the DC Office of Human Rights, shares: “Now in its 45th year, the DC Human Rights Act is one of the most progressive human rights in the United States, with 23 protected traits. Protecting human rights is a joint effort and the Gala is a chance to celebrate and honor our local human rights champions, who work tirelessly to uphold and advance human rights protections!”

Find out more about the DC Office of Human Rights [here](#) and the DC Commission on Human Rights [here](#).

Registration for the Gala can be found at bit.ly/HumanRightsGala2022.

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About the District of Columbia Commission on Human Rights

The Commission on Human Rights is a quasi-independent body whose primary function is to adjudicate private sector discrimination complaints brought under the DC Human Rights Act. It is comprised of 15 volunteer Commissioners appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. Three administrative law judges assist the Commission in upholding its responsibilities.

About the District of Columbia Office of Human Rights

The District of Columbia Office of Human Rights (OHR) was established to eradicate discrimination, increase equal opportunity and protect human rights for persons who live in or visit the District of Columbia. The agency enforces local and federal human rights laws, including the DC Human Rights Act, by providing a legal process to those who believe they have been discriminated against. OHR also proactively enforces human rights in the District through Director’s Inquiries, which allow it to identify and investigate practices and policies that may be discriminatory.