



PRESS RELEASE

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Community Leaders Celebrated During Human Rights Month

Tony Brunswick, Peace McFarland, and Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc. to be Honored at the 13th Annual Human Rights Awards Ceremony.

(WASHINGTON, DC) – Today, the DC Commission on Human Rights (COHR) Office of Human Rights (OHR) will host its 13th annual Human Rights Award Ceremony. Every year, the ceremony commemorates the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The COHR collects nominations to award those who exhibit exceptional dedication to protection against discrimination and/or to help enhance the diverse abilities of people who live or work in the District of Columbia.

This year's theme, in partnership with the Office of Disability Rights, the Mayor's Office of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing, and the Department of Behavioral Health, is "*Protecting and Celebrating Bodies and Minds of All Abilities*" and celebrates all levels of physical and mental abilities.

The following awardees and community were chosen for their dedication in improving the lives of people with physical and mental disabilities:

- **Cornelius R. "Neil" Alexander Humanitarian Award is named after the COHR's Chief Administrative Law Judge and recognizes lifetime contributions to protecting the 23 traits under the DC Human Rights Act.**

Tony Brunswick's impactful career in DC spans 25 years, marked by an unwavering commitment to justice and a passion for cultivating a more equitable society. His journey has been dedicated to advancing human rights, evident through his leadership roles in prominent nonprofit organizations. As the former Executive Director of Art Enables, DC's sole art gallery and studio dedicated to artists with disabilities, and a decade-long stint as the Chief Operating Officer at LIFT, an anti-poverty organization, Tony has played a pivotal role in addressing the challenges faced in our local community. Earlier in his career, he contributed significantly to So Others Might Eat (SOME), focusing on supporting low-income and homeless individuals. Currently, Tony leverages his expertise as a mental health therapist while providing consulting and coaching services to local nonprofits in the community. His dedication extends to the Board of Directors of Beyond

Borders, a human rights organization in Haiti.

- **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.**

Peace McFarland, the youngest in her close-knit family, embodies her name by bringing tranquility and harmony. A compassionate advocate, Peace believes emotional intelligence is key to a healthy lifestyle. Engaging with the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) and volunteering with organizations like the Anacostia Coordinating Council (ACC), Friends and Family of Incarcerated People (FFOIP), and Ward 8 Councilmember Trayon White, Peace reshapes the narrative for District of Columbia youth. As a Senior at Bard High School Early College DC (Bard DC), she aspires to blend pre-law and psychology, charting a path toward a future as a criminal defense attorney.

- **The “Community Award” is presented to a DC organization that provides outstanding services to support the human rights of DC residents, workers, or visitors.**

Founded in 1996 by two law students, Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc. (AJE) emerged in Ward 8 with a mission: empower low-income parents with the knowledge and resources to advocate for their children's special education rights. Under the leadership of native Washingtonian Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas, AJE has evolved into a parent-led force ensuring that children, especially those with disabilities, receive proper education and health services. Despite a small staff, AJE has impacted over 10,000 families, trained 15,000 parents, and earned federal designations as the Parent Training Information Center and D.C. Health Information Resource Center. Recognized in 2021 as one of the best nonprofits by the Catalogue for Philanthropy, AJE remains a powerhouse for educational equity in D.C.

Motoko Aizawa, Chair of the DC Commission on Human Rights, says: *“We're deeply grateful for all the wonderful nominations from our vibrant community. The passion and hard work evident in these nominations showcase the incredible initiatives happening in our community. We congratulate our awardees and celebrate their contributions!”*

Hnin Khaing, Director of the DC Office of Human Rights, shares: *“With 23 protected traits, the DC Human Rights Act embodies our shared journey toward progress and inclusivity. Tonight's awardees represent our commitment to creating a future filled with equality and justice for all. So, let's celebrate our local champions and reflect on our strides as a city and nation in the fight against prejudice and discrimination.”*

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

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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, work, 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.

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