

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

University of Houston Law Center to honor outstanding immigrants for service to the community

Arrival Awards celebration of local immigrant achievement to promote unity, respect, justice and hope.

Sept. 4, 2019 — The University of Houston Law Center Immigration Clinic will host the 20th anniversary Arrival Awards on Sept. 26 to recognize the achievements of three immigrant Houstonians and promote peace and unity among all cultures.

The honorees are Harry Gee, co-owner of the Houston Texans; Sima Ladjevardian, political activist and member of the MFAH Board of Trustees; and Lynden Rose, consul general of the Bahamas.

Arrival Award chairmen, Gordon Quan, managing partner of Quan Law Group, and Charles Foster, chairman of Foster LLP, said the goal of the event is to:

- Honor distinguished Americans who through their career achievements represent a successful, positive face of legal immigration
- Promote values of unity, respect, hope, justice and peace
- Celebrate how cultural variety has enriched Houston and its artistic offerings

“We are proud to be bringing together such a diverse group of individuals and organizations,” said Quan. “We hope to inspire people to see the value of others no matter where they come from.”

The Houston Ballet, Houston Grand Opera, World Affairs Council of Greater Houston and Houston Public Media are event partners for the gala.

The World Affairs Council of Greater Houston will integrate cultural experiences inspired by the honorees’ countries of origin into the evening’s cuisine, music and entertainment.

Artists and children from various backgrounds will perform an original fusion piece called “Unity.” The “2019 Artists of Distinction” include:

- Karina Gonzalez, the first Hispanic principal ballerina of the Houston Ballet
- Rupert Edwards III, husband of Karina Gonzalez and former Houston Ballet dancer
- Daniel Noyola of the Houston Grand Opera
- Geraldina Interiano Wise who will create a one-of-a-kind live painting to be auctioned off at the end of the night.

Unlike previous galas, in addition to the main honorees, the next generation of community leaders will be recognized as “Beacons of Light” for their professional and philanthropic work advocating equality and peace. This group includes: Rusty Hardin, Sue Habib, Dr. Himesh Lakhani, Sunil Sharma, Farida Adjani, Antonio Arellano, Ibrahim Firat, Connie Kwan-Wong, Magali Suárez Candler, Chesley Choudhury, Aamir Kazmi, Bibi Khan Sandija Bayot, David Capello, Nathaniel Martinez Susham Modi, Karla Perez, Ruby Lichte Powers, Anuj A. Shah, Sebastian Simon, Elise Wilkinson, and Dr. Behyar Zoghi. A video called [“Stand By Me”](#), was created by this group to encourage the community to attend the gala and/or support the clinic’s work through donations.

This year marks 20 years that the University of Houston Law Center Immigration Clinic has provided pro bono legal representation to victims of persecution, violence, human trafficking, labor trafficking, genocide and children who qualify for juvenile visas.

The gala will begin at 6 p.m., Sept. 26, at the Hilton Houston Post Oak, 2001 Post Oak Blvd.

Click [here](#) for more information and to register. For event questions or sponsorship opportunities contact Myra Johnson at 859-536-0748 or myra@ephesusinvestments.com.

Media contacts: Carrie Anna Criado, UH Law Center Assistant Dean of Communications and Marketing, 713-743-2184, cacriado@central.uh.edu; Elena Hawthorne, Assistant Director of Communications and Marketing, 713-743-1125, ehawthor@central.uh.edu

About the University of Houston

The [University of Houston](#) is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university recognized with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter for excellence in undergraduate education. UH serves the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. Located in the nation's fourth-largest city and one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse regions in

the country, UH is a federally designated Hispanic- and Asian-American-Serving institution with enrollment of more than 46,000 students.

About the University of Houston Law Center

The [University of Houston Law Center \(UHLC\)](#) is a dynamic, top tier law school located in the nation's 4th largest city. UHLC's Health Law, Intellectual Property Law, and Part-time programs rank in the U.S. News Top 10. It awards Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) and Master of Laws (LL.M.) degrees, through its academic branch, the College of Law. The Law Center is more than just a law school. It is a powerful hub of intellectual activity with more than 11 centers and institutes which fuel its educational mission and national reputation. UHLC is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools.

About the University of Houston Law Center Immigration Clinic

The [University of Houston Law Center Immigration Clinic](#) was founded in 1999 by Joseph Vail, a former immigration judge and UHLC professor. The clinic has since developed into one of the largest in the nation, specializing in handling asylum applications for victims of torture and persecution, representing victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and crime, and helping those fleeing civil war, genocide or political repression, as well as those facing other immigration-related matters in federal court. Clinic students are assigned a variety of cases under direct faculty supervision and are responsible for handling initial interviews through the conclusion of the case, including trial. Students also assist organizations that serve the immigrant community and give individual assistance to those held in immigration detention centers. Since inception, the clinic has served at no cost more than 2,000 individuals who otherwise could not afford legal services.

Under the leadership of Clinical Professor Geoffrey A. Hoffman, clinic director since 2009, the UH Law Center Immigration Clinic has won the Community Engagement Award, a university-wide honor, and was named "Pro Bono Hero" by the American Immigration Lawyers Association. Hoffman works closely with Josephine Sorgwe, a clinical supervising attorney, and Rosemary Vega, a clinical lecturer, in teaching students to handle all aspects of their pro bono, family-based cases.