

Mathew Tully Honored at Civil Rights Award Banquet

Traditionally, the Civil Rights Awards Luncheon is an opportunity for ADC to recognize a group of individuals for their outstanding service in protecting civil rights and liberties during the Convention. This year's luncheon was especially relevant as it also celebrated the long-standing relationships and coalitions ADC has formed over the past 25 years.

Among those honored, was Assistant Attorney General R. Alexander Acosta, who received the ADC "Friend in Government Award." The award recognized his unwavering efforts in combating discrimination and promoting civil rights and liberties. In his remarks, Acosta reiterated that the September 11th attacks were not an attack on a group of Americans but rather an attack on the ideas of freedom and liberty that belong to all Americans.

The keynote speaker at the event was Daniel Sutherland, Director of the Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties for the US Department of Homeland Security. Sutherland emphasized the need to "develop, cultivate, and cement long-standing relations with the Arab and Muslim communities." Additionally, he stressed the importance of employing Arab-Americans and Muslims in government jobs and thanked ADC for its tireless efforts on behalf of civil rights. At the end of his speech, Sutherland quoted Khalil Gibran, who said that to be a good citizen is to be "free in thought and deed, but not infringe upon the freedom of others."

The luncheon was also an opportunity to honor the distinguished service of Laura Murphy, retiring Director of the Washington Legislative Office of the ACLU. Before Murphy received her award, a video of remarks from her colleagues, Senators, Congressmen, and family members, was shown. The video portrayed Murphy's outstanding leadership, advocacy, and dedication, on behalf of minority groups. Subsequently, Murphy shared an incident from her youth, in which she was refused a seat at a restaurant in France because the owners thought she was Algerian. This experience, she asserted, demonstrated to her that the struggle for civil rights was not only limited to the African-American community, but was rather a common struggle for many people throughout the US and abroad. Gregory Nojeim, Acting Director of the ACLU Legislative Office, and former ADC Legal Director, presented Murphy with the "Distinguished Service Award."

Other awardees included Mathew B. Tully, Esq., who received the ADC "Pro Bono Attorney of the Year Award" for his dedication and selfless efforts in representing those in need. The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) and the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) also received the "Excellence in Advocacy" award for their tireless efforts on behalf of the civil rights community. Additional awardees were Nabih Ayad, JD, who received the ADC "Advocate Award," and the Honorable George Caram Steeh, who received the ADC "Distinguished Federal Public Service Award." Hon. Sam A. Salamey, who serves as President of the Lebanese American Heritage Club, also received the ADC "Community Leadership Award."

