



***The American Immigration Council welcomes you to the
18th Annual Immigrant Achievement Awards***

Honoring our immigrant past; shaping our immigrant future.

Our Mission

The **American Immigration Council** was established in 1987 as an IRS designated 501(c)(3), tax-exempt, not-for-profit educational, charitable organization.

Our mission is to strengthen America by honoring our immigrant history and shaping how Americans think and act towards immigration now and in the future.

The American Immigration Council exists to promote the prosperity and cultural richness of our diverse nation by:

- Educating citizens about the enduring contributions of America's immigrants;
- Standing up for sensible and humane immigration policies that reflect American values;
- Insisting that our immigration laws be enacted and implemented in a way that honors fundamental constitutional and human rights;
- Working tirelessly to achieve justice and fairness for immigrants under the law.

The **American Immigration Council** believes that the dignity of the individual knows no boundary. Our nation's moral and ethical values must be reflected in the way we welcome immigrants.

Program

Opening Remarks

Benjamin E. Johnson

Executive Director, American Immigration Council

Tribute to the Life & Legacy of Carmen DiPlacido

Denise Hammond

AIC Ambassador

Welcome and Introduction of Honorees

Leon Harris

WJLA Anchor

‘Change in Motion’ Multimedia Contest Award

Shireen Alihaji

Immigrant Youth Achievement Award

Suamhirs Rivera

Immigrant Achievement Award

Cristeta Comerford

White House Executive Chef

Stephen K. Fischel Distinguished Public Service Award

Gen. Colin L. Powell

Retired

Closing Remarks

Benjamin E. Johnson

Executive Director, American Immigration Council



Remembering

Carmen DiPlacido

Carmen A. DiPlacido, a warm and gentle giant in the immigration bar who graced the lives of many, passed away unexpectedly on February 1, 2013.

Carmen spent 27 years with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs where he left his indelible mark on law and policy related to consular services, passports, and, above all, US citizenship. He

ultimately served as Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for both Overseas Citizens Services and Passport Services and represented the United States in negotiating and implementing international agreements to protect and assist US Citizens. He was instrumental in responding to international crises involving the safety of Americans abroad and in implementing the State Department's responsibilities to protect aviation security from terrorist threats. He led negotiations to coordinate the activities of the airline and the Government following aviation disasters abroad and continued to advise victims' assistance groups after joining the private bar. He participated in negotiating consular law treaties related to foreign adoption, international parental child abduction and other issues. Carmen shaped the Child Citizenship Act, which allows certain foreign-born, biological and adopted children of American citizens to acquire US citizenship automatically. But perhaps his proudest accomplishment was establishing the presumption that an American who naturalized in a foreign country intended to retain US citizenship.

Carmen left the State Department for private practice in 1997 and was revered as the leading expert on citizenship and nationality. As a mentor to many, he gave generously of his enormous practical knowledge and huge institutional memory. He also served with distinction on many AILA committees and was a strong supporter of AIC.

Carmen was a dedicated husband to Ann and loving father to Christie and a steadfast supporter of people with intellectual disabilities. He was the founder and president of Porto Charities, Inc., which provides resources to improve the quality of life for the developmentally and intellectually disabled and promotes awareness of, and friendship with and for, the membership. Carmen will be remembered for his brilliance, expertise, leadership, generosity, warmth and compassion for people, particularly the disadvantaged. He left us too soon, but touched us so deeply.



Master of Ceremonies

Leon Harris

WJLA Anchor

Award-winning journalist Leon Harris anchors the 5 p.m. and 11 p.m. newscasts for ABC7/WJLA-TV. He came to Washington after 20 years at CNN's Atlanta Headquarters, where he co-anchored CNN Live Today and Prime News, and hosted CNN Presents and American Stories.

Harris has covered a wide variety of stories including the September 11th terror strikes, the Oklahoma City bombing, the Asian Tsunami of 2004, the explosion and crash of TWA Flight 800 and the Los Angeles riots. He has interviewed presidential candidates, and reported live from both the Republican and Democratic National Conventions.

Harris' work has earned him a number of honors, among them multiple CableAce awards for Best Newscaster, and National Emmy Awards for coverage of the September 11th terror strikes, the Oklahoma City bombing and the 2000 presidential election. He was honored, too, with a National Headliner Award and more recently with a National Capital Area Emmy Award for Best Anchor.

Leon Harris is passionate about improving the lives of children. His weekly segment entitled Harris' Heroes profiles adults helping kids or kids helping their peers in the DC metro region. The series runs every Wednesday evening during ABC7 News at Five. The news segments can also be found on wjla.com.

Harris also works with many charitable groups including For the Love of Children, Junior Achievement of the National Capital Area, Unique Learning Center, March of Dimes and many others.

He is a Cum Laude and honorary doctorate recipient from Ohio University.



'Change in Motion' Multimedia Contest Award

Shireen Alihaji

Shireen Alihaji is an Angelino filmmaker and musician. Born from Iranian and Ecuadorian parents; Shireen strives to explore new perspectives through art, with the intention of conceiving universal understanding. Her body of work includes collaborations with Adelante

Mujer Latina, Inner-City Filmmakers, ABC studios, Proyecto Jardin, LA Canvas Magazine and StreetsBlog. Today, she directs music videos for socially conscious artists and is planning the first steps towards creating a scholarship program for community scale humanitarianism.

The Council Invites 14-25 Year Olds to Enter the **'Change in Motion' Multimedia Contest**

The competition challenges today's young adults to explore the role that immigration plays in their lives and communities through video and other multimedia projects.

Projects should focus on celebrating America as a nation of immigrants as well as the immigration's impact on our everyday lives.



For more information visit ChangeinMotionMedia.com.

Deadline for submissions is 11:59 EST, October 31, 2013.



Immigrant Youth Achievement Award

Suamhirs Rivera

Suamhirs Rivera is a young man who is a survivor of the children's system of care in San Diego County. He grew up in Honduras where he was exposed to extreme violence at the hands of his father.

When he was 16, he was kidnapped and brought to America where he was trafficked and sold. When he was finally rescued from his abductors, he was further traumatized for several years, in a system that was designed to "help" him. He did not speak English, he knew no one, and he had 17 different residential placements while he was in this system. During that time, Suamhirs was alone, frustrated, scared, and suffering from PTSD; he also experienced further bullying, abuse and was heavily medicated. Suamhirs shares a story of how the childcare system helped in some ways, but also further traumatized him.

Suamhirs travels the Country advocating for youth and teaching caregivers and service providers how to create a relationship of trust and open communication with children who have been abused and traumatized. He offers suggestions about how the choice of words and actions can create rapport, impart trust, and empower youth to focus on their inner strengths as a way to move forward and become self-sufficient, productive adults.

Suamhirs Rivera shares his story of survival and hope and how one special adult created a relationship of mutual respect and trust in a way that empowered him to become the amazing young man he is today.



Immigrant Achievement Award

Cristeta Comerford

White House Executive Chef

Born in Manila, Philippines, Cristeta “Cris” Comerford now works in the most famous house in the United States of America. Mrs. Comerford became the first woman to become the executive chef at the White House since the Kennedys appointed the position to a high- profile statement of personal style. She is also the first minority, a Filipino-American to hold the position. Serving as an assistant chef during the Clinton Administration, her consummate passion and talents proved worthy. Mrs. Laura Bush appointed her to Executive Chef in August, 2005.

She continues to serve the President and First Lady Michelle Obama. Her many responsibilities include designing and executing menus for state dinners, social events, holiday functions, receptions and official luncheons.

The White House program Healthy Food Initiatives has encouraged her White House culinary team to adopt an elementary school in DC, the Harriet Tubman Elementary School as a part of the Let’s Move Campaign. Her team of chefs has continually embraced healthy cooking and eating as a passion and lifestyle choice.

Chef Comerford attended the University of the Philippines to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Food Technology. Her 26 years of culinary experience include fine dining restaurants in Washington DC, Chicago, Austria, Napa Valley and France. As a member of the Club Chefs du Chef, an association of chefs of heads of states, she had continually pursued her growth in techniques, abilities and food trends.

Because of her strong belief in family and community, she has faithfully served as a church deacon and is currently leading a home study group with her husband, John. They have both volunteered on humanitarian trips to an impoverished town in Brazil.

Her eleven year old daughter Danielle has shown her culinary interest by writing their New Year’s Eve Dinner menu and family events. They live in Columbia, Maryland in between visiting families in Seattle and Chicago.



Stephen K. Fischel Distinguished Public Service Award

Gen. Colin L. Powell

Retired

For over 50 years, General Colin L. Powell (Ret.) has devoted his life to public service. Having held senior military and diplomatic positions across four presidential administrations, Powell's deep commitment to democratic values and freedom has been felt throughout the world.

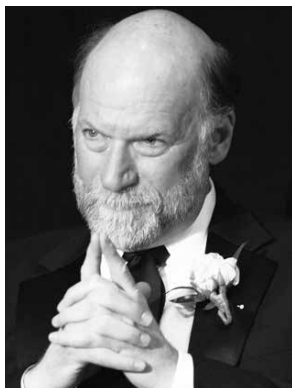
The son of Jamaican immigrants, Powell was born in Harlem in April 1937 and was raised in the South Bronx. He was educated in the New York City public schools and after graduating from Morris High School attended the City College of New York where he earned a B.S. in Geology. It was not until he joined the Army ROTC program at CCNY that he discovered his calling and launched his military career. He received a commission as an Army second lieutenant upon graduation in 1958 and went on to serve in the United States Army for 35 years, rising to the rank of Four-Star General. He served as the 12th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before retiring in 1993.

Under President George W. Bush, Powell was appointed the 65th Secretary of State and was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate. As Secretary of State, he led the State Department in major efforts to address and solve regional and civil conflicts—in the Middle East, Sudan, Congo and Liberia, in the Balkans, Cyprus, Haiti, Northern Ireland, Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere. In all areas, he used the power of diplomacy to build trust, forge alliances and then help transform these unstable regions into areas where societies and cultures have the potential to prosper. He also worked at the forefront of American efforts to advance economic and social development worldwide.

Among the many U.S. Military awards and decorations Powell has received are the Defense Distinguished Service Medal (with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters), the Army Distinguished Service Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Soldier's Medal, Bronze Star

Medal and the Purple Heart. His civil awards include two Presidential Medals of Freedom, the President's Citizens Medal, the Congressional Gold Medal and the Secretary of Energy Distinguished Service Medal. In addition, he has also received awards from over two-dozen countries to include a French Legion of Honor and an honorary knighthood bestowed by H.M. Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain.

Powell is married to the former Alma Vivian Johnson of Birmingham, Alabama. They live in McLean, Virginia and have three children and four grandchildren.



Remembering **Stephen K. Fischel**

Stephen K. Fischel, our dear friend, revered colleague, Board Member and strong Council supporter, died Saturday, June 28, 2008 at the age of 59.

Steve began his illustrious career nearly 35 years ago with the U.S. Department of State. A tireless public servant, Steve dedicated himself to shaping legislative policy at the Visa office, and, with his promotion in 1997 to the Director of the Office of Legislation, Regulations, and Advisory Assistance, the introduction of important technology into the Visa process, ultimately eliminating backlogs and greatly reducing processing times. He also participated on the President's Bilateral Migration Talks with Mexico in 2001, providing options to address the "regularization" of undocumented Mexicans, crafting a framework for a bilateral Temporary Worker Program, and designing significant reform to the H-2B program.

For this work and others, Steve received numerous awards, including the Secretary of State's Award and the Hammer Award for creating facilitative visa processing for the Atlanta Olympics. In 2006, the Council was proud to honor him with a *Distinguished Public Service Award* for his leadership and commitment to serving the public with integrity, knowledge, wit, common sense, and abiding courage.

In 2005, Steve joined the Board of Trustees of the American Immigration Council.

Beyond sharing with us his professional knowledge and ideas, Steve was a strong leader and good friend to all of the Council – working tirelessly to promote the Council's mission, fundraising for our crucial work, and most importantly, acting as a steadfast friend to our staff and members. Quick with a joke, a wide smile and a good story, Steve always did his best to enliven any and all Council functions. He will be missed by us all.

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