

Past Honorees



1987 A. Leon Higginbotham

“I must confess that, other than their own self-advancement, I am at a loss to understand what is it that the so-called black conservatives are so anxious to conserve.”



1989 Constance Baker

“Those standing on the shoulders of Thurgood Marshall now reach far beyond the black community.”



1990 Julius Chambers

“...You ought to appreciate how serious our plight is today and how threatening what the Supreme Court is doing is to all of us and to what we are trying to accomplish.”



1991 Randall Robinson

“If we know not enough to make them account to us for their policies, then we find an enormous, damaging inconsistency between what we say we are and what we do.”



1992 Roger Wilkins

“Rodney King was portrayed by the defense as a great, brutal, violent, irrational black threat that had to be subdued by any means necessary.”



1993 Constance L. Rice

“In the very simplest terms, [Thurgood Marshall] taught this country the meaning of its credo by forcing it to begin confronting the lie of racial inequity.”



1996 Deval Patrick

“This nation is grappling with a profound question: whether it’s sad legacy of exclusion based on race, on ethnicity or on gender, is really behind us -- and if not, whether we will have the collective will to do anything about it...”



1997 Derrick Bell

“Slavery is, as an example of what white America has done, a constant reminder of what white America might do.”



1998 Mary Frances Berry

“The time when you need to do something is when nobody else is willing to do it, when people are saying it can’t be done.”



1999 Julian Bond

“For too many people today, the fight for equal justice has become a spectator sport. A kind of national basketball association in which the players are black and the spectators are white. But in this true-to-life competition between good and evil, the players are every color and condition.”



2000 Ronald V. Dellums

“If it is radical to oppose the insanity and the cruelty of the Vietnam War...to oppose racial and economic oppression..to want to eradicate poverty, and hunger and disease, and inadequate education and all the other forms of human misery visited upon millions of people , then yes sir, I am proud to be called a radical.”



2001 Harry Belafonte

“We were making America angry. We were upsetting folks -- as if there was some way to settle the question of oppression without upsetting someone.”



2002 Lani Guinier

“We have to use race to begin to transform not just the canary but also the atmosphere in the mines -- to benefit us all.”



2003 Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr.

“Perhaps we should focus on diminishing the social roots of crime instead of increasing the penalties for committing crime.”

2004 Thurgood (50th Anniversary of Brown v. Board Tribute)



Juan A. Williams



Kimberle Crenshaw



Constance Rice



2005 Christopher Edley, Jr.

“Bull Connor is dead. The danger here, of course, is that Americans believe that racism is dead.”



2006 Yvonne Brathwaite Burke

“You might not be able to have ‘affirmative action’ but you can call it something else.”



2007 Reverend James E. Lawson, Jr.

“Most people are unaware of how dangerous our situation is in the United States. While we’ve made certain kinds of progress against racism, we have not dismantled racism in the United States by any means.”



2008 Elaine Brown

“We have a duty to do everything we can to raise up our people and to remember ourselves, and to remember that we are still not free, that we are living in the house that we built with our blood.”



2009 Manning Marable

“There is no coherent left that exists today in the United States, in its national politics...Therefore, Obama’s public policy program by necessity must be to the right of what his core political constituency is, and that’s his dilemma.”



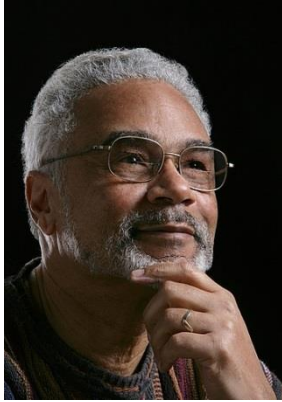
2010 Harry Edwards

“The diversity and urgency of the challenges will either propel this nation to hitherto unprecedented heights of purpose, possibility, and productivity or it will drag us down into an ever deepening spiral of social, political, and economic chaos toward a national nervous breakdown.”



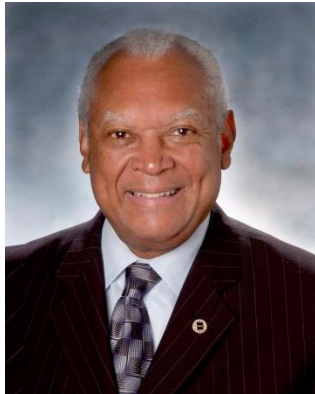
2011 Honorable Diane Watson

“The struggle for better education for minorities continues. It is not just a local battle, but it is being fought at the national level.”



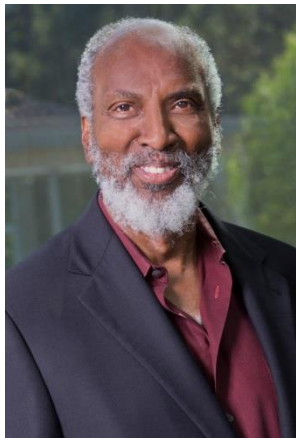
2012 Clayborne Carson

“What we realize is that things we were fighting for might not succeed in our lifetime, or even our kids’ lifetime. But nonetheless, those things are worth it...[they give us] a purpose, a spiritual purpose.”



2013 John W. Mack

“Fifty years after the march, Los Angeles is the new Ellis Island of America, a pioneering experiment of democracy. We must remind ourselves of the unfinished agenda of the march, [and work towards] the creation of a level playing field, to ensure that everyone, without regards to race, economic condition, gender, sexual orientation, or religion has a seat at the table of justice.”



2014 john a. powell

“I suggest that America has two parents. One is the enlightenment project, and the other is slavery. Those two parents gave [birth to] a distinctively angst ridden child called America where everything was defined by those two contradictions.”