

Susan Burton, the Founder of A New Way of Life Re-Entry Project, Honors Influencers in the Struggle for Justice

ANWOL Marks its 19th Gala with Title Sponsor Drug Policy Alliance by Honoring Sen. Holly Mitchell, Ben L. Crump, Esq., ANWOL Legal Department and Impact Justice

LOS ANGELES, CA, USA, December 8, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Social Justice Advocate [Susan Burton](#) remembers back in 1998 when she founded [A New Way of Life Re-Entry Project](#) (ANWOL). "We had a whisper of a chance to succeed," she recalled. "Through ANWOL, so much pain and suffering have been transformed into resilience, determination and hope for so many. A lot has happened since the beginning."

Among the many ground-breaking inroads accomplished by ANWOL, a grassroots non-profit, was its 19th Annual Gala and Awards Event hosted at The LA Hotel Downtown in Los Angeles, California. The gala's mistresses of ceremonies were Val Zavala, vice president of News and Public Affairs at KCET, the nation's largest independent public television station, and Margaret Prescod, host of Sojourner Truth, a public affairs program on Pacifica Radio stations KPFK 90.7 FM in Southern California, WPFW in Washington, DC, WBAI in New York City and several affiliate stations across the country.

"We are successful because of like-minded people who relentlessly fight for change," expressed Burton. This year's honorees were California State Senator Holly J. Mitchell (Community Champion Award), Civil Rights Attorney Benjamin

L. Crump, Esq. (Industry Impact Award), Impact Justice (Movement Builder Award), and A New Way of Life's Legal Department (Flozelle Woodmore Memorial Award). Each of the 2017 recipients understand and support ANWOL's mission to restore the civil rights of formerly incarcerated people and to empower, organize and mobilize formerly incarcerated people as advocates for social change and personal transformation.

"We [Black and Brown people] deserve equal justice under the law especially when I think about how Trayvon Martin, a Black young man walking home with a bag of candy and a can of iced tea became the number one national news headline in 2012," vocalized Crump who represents the Martin and Brown families and others in the most important and contentious cases of our time. "How could the



ANWOL Founder Susan Burton congratulates California Senator Holly J. Mitchell the recipient of the Community Champion Award. Mitchell's legislation seeks to improve human services, end the trafficking of minors, and defends the civil rights of minorities.

case of Michael Brown with his hands up in Ferguson, Missouri get shot and killed in broad daylight - an 18-year-old kid? His body laid in the street for more than 4 hours."

Crump continued, in part, "We must stand for our community, to speak up for our community and fight for our community. If we don't, who will? That's why we stand with Susan Burton and A New Way of Life."

The theme, "The Progression," exemplifies ANWOL's ability to push forward with its vision of a world where every person can make decisions for his/her own life, is accountable for those decisions and is valued as a contributing member of the community and the mission to advance multi-dimensional solutions to the effects of incarceration.

"I'm committed to solutions to the injustices of mass incarceration for people like Geneva Cooley, a 70-year-old Black woman, who was sentenced to 999 years, 99 months and 99 days for drug trafficking," asserted Burton. "I met her at the Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women in Wetumpka, Alabama. Geneva is experiencing death by incarceration for riding on a train with drugs."

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change the narrative about mass incarceration among women and has taught at Yale to educate students about social injustice.

She has appeared on The Daily Show with Trevor Noah, Tavis Smiley, Starbucks' Upstanders, KTLA Channel 5, and more.

"The Drug Policy Alliance was enormously proud to stand as the title sponsor for A New Way of Life's 19th Annual Gala," said Maria McFarland Sánchez-Moreno, the Drug Policy Alliance's Executive Director. "We are delighted to support an organization that has done so much to defend and secure rights and equity for formerly incarcerated women and girls, allowing them not only to re-enter society,



Actor Chike' Okonkwo presents Civil Rights Attorney Benjamin L. Crump with the Industry Impact Award and a legislative proclamation. Crump demonstrated that a legacy built around the idea that the U.S. Constitution applies to everyone, at every level of society.

Since that fateful meeting with Cooley, Burton now prints and distributes a photo of Cooley and her "offenses," in her plea to view the misuse of drugs as a health crisis not a punishment.

Key ANWOL supporter, The [Drug Policy Alliance](#) serves as a prime example of a fellow organization dedicated to ensuring human rights and equity for formerly incarcerated women and girls. "Our oldest funders and title sponsor, The Drug Policy Alliance, helped make the gala a success as they continue to advance our policy and advocacy work to restore civil and human rights to people with convictions," praised Burton, dubbed the modern-day Harriet Tubman through helping more than 1,000 formerly incarcerated women find their way to a better quality of life. Burton travels to other countries to

but to thrive and develop as social justice advocates in their own right."

Presenters were Superior Court Judge Peter Espinoza (retired); actor Chiké Okonkwo (The Birth of a Nation, Burning Sands and Being Mary Jane); actor Sheldon Bailey (Nickelodeon Game Shakers, Shameless); actress Taja V. Simpson (Tyler Perry's Boo 2! A Madea Halloween); and Ptosha Storey (Empire and If Loving You is Wrong).

Grammy-nominated singer Angie Fisher performed the powerful song, "Rise Up," with Dawsolene Burrell on keyboard. Dinner music was provided by Robert Colvin (Sax for All Occasions).

Other attendees included Ray Cunningham aka Missterray (Love and Hip Hop Hollywood); Bubba Ganter (Nickelodeon Game Shakers); Alice Amter (Big Bang Theory); CA Senator Steven Bradford; Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas; Los Angeles City Councilman Curren Price; residents of housing provided by ANWOL, politicians, community and religious leaders, ANWOL board members including "Empire" Casting Director Leah Daniels Butler, among others.

In addition to the Drug Policy Alliance, sponsors include The California Endowment, the Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, 2nd District, the Office of Los Angeles City Councilman Curren Price, Affordable Housing CDC, Bill Resnick and Michael Stubbs, Office of Senator Steven Bradford, District 35; Californians for Safety and Justice, Open Society Foundations, Omnia Foundation, USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, Pacific Premier Bank, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children/All Of Us Or None, Lucy's Auto, Keller Williams Realty - Silicon Beach, Andrew's Auto Service Center and the Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership. In-kind sponsors included Murad, Oilmi Beauty, Tim Sher, Sheldon Bailey, Footnanny,



The ANWOL Legal Team: Pavithra Menon, Stephanie Lin, CT Turney-Lewis, Mihal Rose Ansik, and Joshua Kim (not pictured) were the recipients of ANWOL's Flozelle Woodmore Memorial Awards. The legal team has represented thousands of people in expungement cases.



Impact Justice, a national innovation and research center advancing new ideas and solutions for justice reform, was awarded the Movement Builder Award. Alex Busansky, president of Impact Justice, accepted the award.

Tavis Smiley, and more.

For interviews with Susan Burton or more photos from the event, contact Claire S. Arcé at 323-563-3575 or claire@anewwayoflife.org.

About Susan Burton

Susan Burton, described as the Harriet Tubman of our time, is the founder of A New Way of Life Re-Entry Project (ANWOL) and the annual Justice on Trial Film Festival to visually raise the awareness about social justice, mass incarceration, and the need for criminal justice reform. In 2017, ANWOL launched JustUS Voices Storytelling for ChangeSM – a multimedia initiative aiming to transform the policy and public dialogue on mass incarceration through the lived experiences of formerly incarcerated women.



ANWOL Founder and Executive Director Susan Burton names Tiffany Johnson and Michael Towler as the new co-directors of the grass-roots organization.

About A New Way of Life Re-Entry Project (ANWOL)

Founded in 1998 by CNN Top Ten Hero Susan Burton, A New Way of Life, based in South Los Angeles, provides housing and support to benefit formerly incarcerated women for successful community re-entry, family reunification and individual healing. ANWOL also works to restore the civil rights of formerly incarcerated people and empowering, organizing and mobilizing advocates for social change, civic engagement and personal transformation. Burton is the author of her memoir, "Becoming Ms. Burton: From Prison to Recovery to Leading the Fight for Incarcerated Women" available at www.becomingmsburton.com and Amazon.

Social media tags: #Gala2017 #UpandOut #ANewWayofLife #TheProgression #StopInjustice #NeverAgain #FreeAmerica

Connect with Ms. Burton and A New Way of Life Re-entry Project on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ANewWayofLifeReentryProject/

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ANewWayOfLifeReentry>

Twitter: @anewwayoflife1 and @susanburtonLA

Instagram: @anewwayoflifereentryproject

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