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## NEA to honor 12 human and civil rights champions at annual ceremony

*Freedom Summer participant and surviving 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike member among recipients*

**WASHINGTON**— In schools and communities across America they push to bend the arc of the moral universe. They get knocked down but get up and fight for those who also have been knocked down. From the front lines of Freedom Summer and the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike to behind bars in California’s prison, they are unwavering champions of students, educators and unionism. They enrich and defend the lives of our youths in immigrant, refugee, Native and LGBTQ communities. They light the way for those left behind. They dream big and inspire others to do the same.

They are the recipients of the National Education Association’s most prestigious NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards. Since 1967, the NEA has recognized and honored everyday heroes who have fought—and continue to fight—for human and civil rights across the country. This year, NEA will acknowledge 12 outstanding social justice champions at its [Human and Civil Rights Awards](#) ceremony at 5 p.m., Wednesday, July 3, 2019, at the General Assembly Theater at the [George R. Brown Convention Center](#) in Houston, Texas.

“The recipients of the 2019 NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards are social justice champions, forging paths for opportunities for every student in every school no matter their ZIP code, and standing up against injustices everywhere,” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. “We proudly honor their contributions and sacrifices. By embodying what is right and just about the world in which we live, they motivate us to purposeful and principled action.”

The 2019 NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards recipients are:

### **Civil rights activist, attorney Dr. Charles Prickett**

Civil rights activist and attorney Dr. Charles Prickett will receive the NEA Carter G. Woodson Memorial Award in recognition of a life dedicated to the service of others. Inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s dream of an America judged by the content of its character, Prickett took part in one of the nation’s most important youth movements, 1964’s “Freedom Summer,” which attempted to register black voters in Mississippi, a state notorious for denying voter access through racist literacy tests, poll taxes, and, at times, with bullets. Prickett not only registered hundreds of new voters, he also helped black farmers gain access to federally subsidized farm programs and marched over the Edmund Pettus bridge to Selma on Bloody Sunday.

### **Baxter Leach and the Surviving Members of the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike**

Baxter Leach and the surviving members of the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike will receive the [César Chavez Acción y Compromiso Human and Civil Rights Award](#) for their historic and courageous battle for the dignity of workers that caught the attention and support of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The striking workers demanded safer working conditions, better wages, and a recognition of their union. The Memphis Sanitation Strike also exposed the economic and racial inequality among residents of the city. Following King's address to the striking sanitation workers, he was assassinated on the second floor of the Lorraine motel. Click on the [bio](#) to learn more about Baxter Leach and the 1968 sanitation strike.

#### **Prisoner, activist, immigrant Eddy Zheng, of California**

Youth counselor and activist Eddy Zheng will receive the [NEA Ellison S. Onizuka Memorial Award](#) for his dedication to the redemptive and transformative powers of education. Born in China and arriving in the United States at age 12, Zheng spent 20 years in prison. Since his release, he has devoted his time to working with San Francisco-area youths, mentoring them on the importance of an education, honoring their roots, and raising awareness about the impact of criminalization and deportation within the Asian American Pacific Islander community. Because of his work as a recognized advocate for prison reform and youth violence prevention, he also is the subject of an award-winning documentary, "[Breathin](#)": The Eddy Zheng Story." Click on his [bio](#) to learn more about Eddy Zheng.

#### **Teacher Luanelly Iglesias, of Connecticut**

Bilingual teacher and founder of [Madre Latina Foundation](#) Luanelly Iglesias will receive the [NEA George I. Sánchez Memorial Award](#) for her decades spent improving the lives of Hispanic students and, through her non-profit organization, enhancing educational opportunities for Latinas. A member of the [Connecticut Education Association](#), Iglesias helped create bilingual programming and materials for students who have recently arrived to the U.S., which her colleagues also use to meet the needs of their students. Click on her [bio](#) to learn more about Ms. Iglesias.

#### **Dolores McCracken, educator and past president of the Pennsylvania State Education Association**

For a lifetime spent in advocacy for students and public education as well as strong unionism, NEA will recognize the late Dolores McCracken with its [H. Council Trenholm Memorial Award](#). A longtime union leader who ascended to the presidency of the Pennsylvania State Education Association in 2017, McCracken was a passionate educator who pushed young people to always achieve their best. She also was a social justice warrior whose legacy addresses racial, social and economic disparities in the public schools of Pennsylvania. Click on her [bio](#) to learn more about her work.

#### **Educators Rick and Lorie Erickson, of Bayfield, Wisconsin**

Veteran educators Rick and Lorie Erickson will receive the [NEA Leo Reano Memorial Award](#) for their tireless efforts to enrich the lives of children in the Native community, in particular the Anishinaabe Nation in the Great Lakes region. In addition to working with the Bayfield school system and the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa to incorporate Native traditions into curriculum, they have laid a foundation to celebrate Native youth for generations to come. Click on [bio](#) to learn more about their impressive work.

### **OneAmerica with Justice for All, of Washington State**

[OneAmerica with Justice for All](#) will receive the [NEA Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Award](#) for its work toward a peaceful world where every person's human rights and dignity are respected. The Washington state-based non-profit organization builds power in immigrant and refugee communities. Working with parents, educators, and allies, OneAmerica with Justice for All is making sure that all families, no matter their immigration status, have a public education system that is inclusive, responsive, and meets the needs of every student. Click on [bio](#) to learn more about OneAmerica with Justice for All.

### **Dr. Mia Williams, principal at [Aki Kurose Middle School](#), Seattle, Washington**

Dr. Mia Williams will receive the NEA [Mary Hatwood Futrell Human and Civil Rights Award](#) for her work as a school and institutional leader to make sure girls and young women are learning in an educational system that values their voice at the highest levels. She is an advocate for eliminating barriers and creating formal support networks for women. Click on her [bio](#) to learn more.

### **Leila Kubesch, educator, advocate, and founder of [Parents2Partners.org](#)**

Educator and founder of [Parents2Partners.org](#) [Leila Kubesch](#) will receive the NEA [Reg Weaver Human and Civil Rights Award](#) for guiding children to change their lives and their communities. She founded the organization to empower vulnerable family members to achieve success for their children, thrive and give back. Through her work, she strengthens every student she encounters. See her in action in this [Ted Talk](#) event. Click on her [bio](#) to learn more about Leila Kubesch.

### **The Missouri National Education Association**

The [Missouri National Education Association](#) will receive the NEA [Rosena J. Willis Memorial Award](#) for its mission “to serve as the united voice to promote, advance, and protect public education and to advocate for the rights and interests of students and its members.” Guided by its vision of a great public school for every child no matter her or his ZIP code, the Missouri NEA realigned its priorities and policies to focus on racial and social justice and eliminating education disparities. The association runs an initiative, the [Gilbert Balderrama Minority Scholarship](#), to

encourage aspiring educators of color to pursue the teaching profession. Click on [bio](#) to learn more about the Missouri NEA.

### **GSAFE, of Wisconsin**

The Wisconsin-based [GSAFE](#) will receive the NEA [Virginia Uribe Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights](#) for its work to create just schools for LGBTQ+ youth. In addition to advocating for inclusion of LGBTQ history in public school curriculum and the addition of gender identify/expression to non-discriminatory policies in the state of Wisconsin, GSAFE ensures that students at hundreds of schools have access to reliable programs and spaces that increase feelings of belonging and safety. Click on [bio](#) to learn more about GSAFE.

### **Wisconsin State Senator Tim Cullen**

Senator Tim Cullen will receive the [NEA President's Award](#) for his commitment to increasing diversity in the classroom, his dedication to quality public education, and his lifetime of public service in shaping Wisconsin's public school system. Cullen also developed the [Janesville Minority Teacher Scholarship](#) to increase the number of educators of color in Janesville. Since its inception in 2008, the program has produced educators working in the local school district's schools. Click on his [bio](#) to learn more about Sen. Cullen's work.

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