

# THE DOMINICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

*2010 Annual Scholarship Dinner Dance*



*Access to Justice for all*

*Wednesday May 26, 2010, 6:00 pm*

*The Harvard Club  
35 W. 44th Street  
New York, NY 10036*



## PROGRAM

MASTER OF CEREMONIES.....RAMON ZAYAS, CHANNEL 41

UNITED STATE NATIONAL ANTHEM &  
DOMINICAN NATIONAL ANTHEM .....YAMILET'

WELCOME REMARKS ... ..PETER L. CEDENO  
PRESIDENT

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS TO HONOREES

**ROSITA ROMERO**.....JULISSA A. GOMEZ  
DOMINICAN WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT CENTER

**MARIA ARIAS, ESQ.**.....PATRIA FRIAS COLON  
BATTERED WOMEN'S RIGHTS CLINIC

**HON. FERN A. FISHER**.....LETICIA M. RAMIREZ  
NYS COURTS ACCESS TO JUSTICE PROGRAM

PRESENTATION OF SCHOLARSHIP  
AWARDS.....HON. FAVIOLA SOTO

CLOSING REMARKS.....RAMON ZAYAS, CHANNEL 41

*Colleagues and friends,*

*As in years past, we come together to celebrate our community's progress and hope for the future. To that end, the Dominican Bar Association is awarding two scholarships to Latino prospective law students in need.*

*This past year, the DBA has devoted itself to service to our community and our profession through the legal workshops, bilateral contact with the judiciary as well as our federal, state and local government.*

*We have been successful in achieving our goal of increasing membership even in these hard economic times.*

*Tonight's honorees Fern A. Fisber, Rosita Romero and Maria Arias honor us in that they have shown selfless devotion to ensuring that there is access to justice for all. My thanks to Leticia M. Ramirez and the other members of the dinner committee for orchestrating this wonderful event!*

*Sincerely yours,*

*Peter L. Cedeño*



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salutes the*

## **Dominican Bar Association**

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## ABOUT US

The Dominican Bar Association (DBA) is an incorporated, non-profit, national association representing the interests of Dominican-American, native Dominican, and Latino attorneys, judges, law professors, and law students in the US and the Dominican Republic. Founded in New York City in 1990 as The American Society of Dominican Attorneys, DBA has grown to represent thousands of Latino attorneys and law students across the country. The DBA invites all Latino attorneys as well as others within the profession who subscribe to the goals and philosophy of DBA to become members.

## MISSION STATEMENT

**To increase** professional opportunities for Dominican-American, native Dominican and Latino attorneys in the U.S. legal profession;

**To assist** native Dominican lawyers and attorneys of other nationalities in meeting the requirements for the practice of law in the U.S., including assisting foreign attorneys in obtaining the Foreign Legal Consultant License issued by the Court of Appeals of the State of New York and its counterpart in other U.S. states;

**To assist** in the recruitment and retention of Dominicans and Latinos in U.S. law schools and provide students with mentoring, scholarships and other assistance;

**To partner** with other bar associations, governmental agencies and community groups to foster greater participation in the U.S. legal system by the Dominican and Latino communities; To address issues of concern to the Dominican and Latino communities in the U.S.;

**To safeguard** the civil rights of the Dominican and Latino communities and to empower said communities to fully participate in American society through public education and outreach; and

**To ensure** fairness and diversity in Judicial appointments by serving on various judicial screening panels and committees.



## **Peter Cedeño**

**President of The Dominican Bar Asociation**



Peter Cedeño was born and raised in Washington Heights to parents who emigrated from the Dominican Republic in 1960.

He went to Fordham Prep High School in the Bronx and then received his B.S in Political Science from the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania in 1990. Peter received his J.D. from Pace University in 1993. He was admitted to practice in the State of New York in 1994 and also admitted into the Southern and Eastern Districts of the Federal Courts.

Peter began his career as an Assistant District Attorney in Kings County, and has been practicing Matrimonial/Family law for approximately eleven years exclusively.

Peter has also been a member of the New York State Bar Association, Family Law Section for that period of time. He is currently in the Executive Committee of that section as well as an alumnus of the Matrimonial Law Committee of the New York City Bar.

Peter is also a representative of the Matrimonial Forensic Inter-disciplinary Forum, and holds a position of partner at Wilens and Baker, P.C. specializing in the areas of Family and Matrimonial law.



# HONOREES

## 2010



## ***Hon. Fern Fisher***

### **DIRECTOR OF NEW YORK STATE ACCESS TO JUSTICE PROGRAM**

As Director of the New York State Courts Access to Justice Program, Justice Fisher has set an example of how social justice can be served through the judiciary. Justice Fisher has worked tirelessly to improve access to justice in the courts, increasing services offered by the court to underrepresented litigants; Help Centers house attorneys employed by the court who provide legal and procedural information to individuals without lawyers. Videotapes, various publications and a bilingual website all developed by Justice Fisher provide information to litigants. An outdoor annual Community Law Day operates to provide legal and social services information to the public, while at the same time provides a designated community with a festive barbeque. Justice Fisher has designed and put in place Volunteer Lawyers Programs in Housing, Consumer Credit, Foreclosure and Uncontested Divorce and a Guardian Ad Litem Program. She assists the New York City Department of Aging with operating a Senior Citizen assigned counsel program. Justice Fisher spearheaded the Housing Help Program, designed by the Judge and the United Way of New York City, which funds the program, to provide legal and social service assistance via lawyers and social workers working in a team to prevent homelessness. The project is the first and only court-based homelessness prevention program in the country, serving primarily single-parent families. Seeing a broader picture, the program also provides long-term social services to families to prevent recidivism which often results in homelessness. Justice Fisher is Harvard Law School's graduate recipient of the 2006 Gary Bellows Award for her inspirational commitment to public interest work and an innovative approach to lawyering in the interest of promoting justice.

## ***Rosita M. Romero***



Born in the Dominican Republic to a working class family. Her parents migrated to Puerto Rico in 1973. After living in Puerto Rico for six years, she moved to the United States in 1979, where she has resided since. She started her professional education at the University Puerto Rico, completed a Bachelors of Arts Degree in Sociology at the University of New Haven in Connecticut, and later obtained a Master in Social Work, from Hunter College School of Social Work. She is married and has two wonderful children.

Presently Rosita is the Executive Director and co- founder of the Dominican Women's Development Center, a sixteen year old organization that works with Dominican and other Latina Women in the Washington Heights/Inwood area, organizing them to deal with the problems affecting them in their daily lives.

She has considerable experience in the area of community organizing, advocacy and coalition building. She has managed and led several health educational projects in the areas of reproductive health and rights; cardiovascular disease prevention; HIV/AIDS; and child immunization. She was the Co-Chairperson of Northern Manhattan Collaborates! a coalition of hundreds of organizations in Washington Heights/Inwood which designed a neighborhood needs assessment and five years Action plan in 1993. Presently she is the Co-Convener of the Washington Heights/Inwood GENE Project Coalition; a member of the New York Presbyterian Community Health Advisory Council; a member of the Planning Council of the Columbia Center for the Health of Urban Minorities (CHUM); a member of the Start Right Immunization Coalition in collaboration with the Mailman School of Public Health from Columbia University; a member of the Healthy Schools/Healthy Families Coalition in collaboration with New York Presbyterian Hospital; and the Sisterlink Project on Prevention of Perinatal HIV of the Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership.



Most of her community work has been in the area of housing, women's issues, immigration, and family matters. Some of the organizations in which she has been active are San Romero of the Americas Church, the Dominican Women's Collective, the Committee to Save East Harlem, the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant's Rights, the Committee in Solidarity with the struggle of the Dominican people, the Working Women Homesteaders Association, Community Board #12, the Latino Coalition for Social Justice. She has also been a member of the Washington Heights/Inwood Early Childhood Coalition; and her organization is a member of the Washington Heights/Inwood Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and the New York Latinas Against Domestic Violence.

Ms Romero has been recognized as a strong leader committed to social justice and is well respected in her community. In the process of becoming a leader she has motivated, helped, and inspired others to do so. She is very grateful to the people that have supported her in this process as well.

Ms. Romero was profiled as a Hispanic Role Model on WCBS-TV in September, 2003 during Hispanic Heritage Month; she was selected by the New York Post as one of the 25 Most Influential Latinos in the City of New York in October 2003; and in February 2004 she was selected by Univision as an unsung heroine in the Dominican Community during Dominican Heritage Month. Ms. Romero has been featured in Latina Magazine and Quisqueya Life highlighting successful Dominican Women. She was also selected as one of the 25 most influential Dominican leaders in New York in a survey conducted by Enlace magazine.

## CUNY Law Professor *Maria Arias*

Appointed Family Court Judge, January 20, 2010



Maria Arias was born in Barahona, Republica Dominicana and immigrated to the United States in 1966. She is a graduate of the Bronx High School of Science, and the University of Rochester. She received her Juris Doctor from New York University School of Law, where she was a Root-Tilden Scholar. In 1984 after she graduated from NYU School of Law, she went to work in east Harlem at "Community Law Offices" a legal services office that is part of the Legal Aid Society.

In 1990, she was hired by the City University of New York School of Law [CUNY] to begin its Battered Women's Rights Clinic, she taught and practiced law in that program until her recent appointment to the Family Court of the City of New York in January of 2010. For almost 20 years, in collaboration with her students in the clinic Ms. Arias represented survivors of domestic violence in family court proceedings involving obtaining orders of protections, custody and visitation and child and spousal support. She also handled immigration cases under the Violence Against Women's Act.

Ms. Arias represented thousands of women in securing safety for themselves and their children, and she also helped women get permanent legal status in the United States. During her tenure as a professor she developed expertise in the intersection of immigration, domestic violence and family law. She represented women in complex custody cases under the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act [UCCJEA] involving interstate and domestic violence issues.

Ms. Arias participated in numerous, local, national and international projects in the field of domestic violence including: participating in training institutes sponsored by "Casa de Esperanza", a Latina Domestic violence Organization in St. Paul, MN, focused on development of competence in working with Latina/o communities on immigration relief under the violence Against Women's Act. She has also done training on client centered advocacy on behalf of battered women for the Center for Survivor Justice and Advocacy, and she traveled to Taiwan to train lawyers and students on the Violence Against Women's Act.

She has also been active in the Lawyers Committee Against Domestic Violence, the American Friends Service Committee- New York Metropolitan Regional Office, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer Domestic Violence Task Force, National Advocates for Pregnant Women and Be Present Inc., a national organization committed to the empowerment and leadership of women and girls and their communities.

She has received the following awards for her work in the field of domestic violence and for her teaching: "Progressive Anti-Violence Activism" Award from the Center for Anti-Violence Education -Brooklyn Women's Martial Arts-; "Vida Award for Outstanding Lifetime Achievement" from the Violence Intervention Program and the Haywood Burns/Shanara Gilbert Award from the Northeastern People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference.

In addition to traditional lawyering and academics, Ms. Arias is distinguished by her commitment to forging an innovative approach to pedagogy and to community advocacy. In her work, she advocated for holistic community development strategies to counter domestic violence that combined education, prevention and alternatives to criminalization.

Congratulations to this year's  
Honorees:

Hon. Fern Fisher

Rosita Romero

Maria Arias

and to

The Scholarship Recipients.



Carmen Suardy

&

James Wasserman





STATE OF NEW YORK  
**EXECUTIVE CHAMBER**  
ALBANY 12224



DAVID A. PATERSON  
GOVERNOR

May 26, 2010

Dear Friends:

I am delighted to send greetings to all gathered for the Annual Scholarship Dinner Gala of the Dominican Bar Association, "*Access to Justice for All*."

The Empire State is home to one of the most diverse populations in the United States, enriched by many individuals who reflect the various distinctive Hispanic cultures. Over the years, our society has benefited from valuable contributions made by Dominican-Americans who work within various professions, including those who are members of the legal community.

With a laudable commitment to serving its membership, your Association works to promote a strong working relationship among those of Dominican heritage – attorneys, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, academics and other professionals whose collective mission is to ensure fair and equal application of the law. As individuals bound by a common professional affiliation and cultural pride, you gather in this shared fraternal spirit to acknowledge individuals of distinction. I join to congratulate tonight's honorees – the Honorable Fern A. Fisher of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program; Rosita Romero, of the Dominican Women's Development Center; and the Honorable Maria Arias, of the Battered Women's Rights Clinic – all of whom are respected for their insight, outstanding leadership, and efforts to ensure the rights and availability of services for underprivileged persons.

We also recognize that providing a strong educational foundation for students remains a priority, as we all strive toward the greatness that is our Nation's destiny. On this occasion, you help advance the educational goals of promising students, and I congratulate those scholarship recipients who are given a wonderful opportunity to realize their future career aspirations.

In reflecting on your collective achievements as members of the legal profession and leaders within the Dominican-American community, I applaud your entire membership for maintaining such high standards of professional excellence and dedication to the rule of law. Through such outstanding contributions to the legal community, you have certainly earned the respect and admiration of your colleagues and all New Yorkers.

Warmest regards and best wishes for an enjoyable celebration.

Sincerely,

David A. Paterson

# WILENS & BAKER, P.C.

congratulates

THE DOMINICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

and its honorees

*Hon. Fern A. Fisher*

*Rosita Romero*

*Maria Arias*

Congratulations to this year's scholarship recipients

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congratulates

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and its honorees

*Hon. Fern A. Fisher*

*Rosita Romero*

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Congratulations to this year's scholarship recipients

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*The Law office of Bianka Vega proudly  
congratulates the Honorees for their hard work  
to our community.*

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*Congratulations to the Honorees of the Dominican  
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