FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 1, 2017  
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NEA honors Tennessee educator Michael J. Franklin for lifelong work to improve lives of girls and women  
Annual gala also marks 50th anniversary of the NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner

BOSTON—Michael Joseph Franklin is awarded the NEA Applegate-Dorros Peace and International Understanding Award for his work in educating, empowering, and improving the lives of thousands of girls and women in Honduras.

Since 1967, NEA has recognized and honored those who have fought — and continue to fight — for human and civil rights. This year, NEA honored the outstanding work of 12 American social justice heroes at its annual Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner on Saturday, July 1, in Boston. The theme of the awards dinner is, “Living the Legacy: After 50 Years, Still We Rise.”

“Michael Joseph Franklin embodies the spirit of Dr. Maya Angelou’s beloved poem, ‘Still I Rise,’” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. “Through his deeds and actions, this human and civil rights hero is still rising and carrying the torch forward. Tonight, we renew our commitment to stand for racial and social justice and pledge to continue to shed a light on his work as he guides and inspires us all.”

Spending more than half his life volunteering in Honduras, Franklin works to empower and improve the lives of Honduran women who work amidst violent sexism and physical abuse. He recruits sponsors to support women in their educational pursuits, and has helped provide lessons in basic finance and sustainable business practices. As the domestic coordinator for Alabama Honduras Medical Education Network (AHMEN), Franklin and his team have collaborated with Water With Blessings, which promotes among women the mindset of a clean water culture and also trains them on how to use and maintain their own household’s water filter. Because of this water filtration promotion, an estimated 4,000 individuals in Honduras have now acquired access to clean water.

But Franklin’s activism for women and girls does not stop in Honduras. A member of the Tennessee Education Association’s (TEA) “Statues of Women Committee” and a keynote speaker at the November 2015 conference in Nashville, Franklin was recently awarded TEA’s Susan B. Anthony award for leadership in women’s issues. Not only does Franklin share his love of the Spanish language as a Spanish language teacher at the Franklin County High School (FCHS) in Winchester, Tennessee, he also sponsors the women’s studies club and actively supports the FCHS Gay Straight Alliance Club. No matter where Franklin goes in life he will always be looking to educate, empower and improve the lives of thousands of women and girls everywhere.

When not teaching high school Spanish, Franklin works with women in Honduran villages helping them to create a clean water culture. Watch this video of Michael Joseph Franklin in action. To read his full bio, please click here.

This year, NEA also recognized the anniversary of its merger with the American Teachers Association (ATA), which had represented black teachers in segregated schools. ATA originally created the Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner, and, as part of the merger, NEA continues this awards tradition 50 years later.
Follow the conversation on Twitter #NEARA17 @NEAMedia

The National Education Association is the nation’s largest professional employee organization, representing more than 3 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.