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NEA honors educator Luanelly Iglesias with human and civil rights award

Iglesias is among a dozen recipients of the prestigious NEA Human and Civil Rights Award

HOUSTON—Luanelly Iglesias is tireless advocate for Latina and Latino students, and through her bilingual teaching, non-profit organization, creative professional development, and devotion to promoting diversity in school environments, she has plethora of accomplishments in her professional career. Because of these efforts, Iglesias was honored with NEA’s George I. Sánchez Memorial Award.

“The work achieved by Luanelly Iglesias makes her an incredibly deserving recipient of the 2019 NEA Human and Civil Rights Award,” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. “Her contributions to the lives of Latina and Latino students are immense. To see what Iglesias has accomplished is motivating not only to educators, but to the greater population of people who strive to find ways to make a difference.”

Iglesias was born in Puerto Rico, but has been learning and working in the United States since she was 18. For the past 15 years, she has been teaching bilingually in Connecticut schools. Within the schools and districts she has worked in, Iglesias has devoted time to enhancing the educational opportunities of her students through as many avenues as she can imagine.

Realizing the importance of family engagement in students’ lives, Iglesias encourages her school communities to offer opportunities where families can express pride in their Latino heritage. She has organized cultural events, such as Hispanic heritage celebrations, holiday celebrations, and community awareness events.

Iglesias’ impressive work is not only directed at interacting with students and families; she also devotes time for invaluable professional development opportunities for school staff, focused on diversity and inclusion. Iglesias’ initiatives include mentoring staff specifically on how to meet the needs of their Latina and Latino students, and creating bilingual instructional materials educators can use in their own classrooms.

“Throughout her career, Luanelly has been a tireless champion for her students, creating a bilingual program for students recently arriving in the United States,” said Connecticut Education Association President Jeff Leake. “Her efforts in the school community through family engagement continues to provide students the opportunity to have pride in their Hispanic heritage. The cultural exchanges that Luanelly brings to the classroom and the school community teach students the importance of honoring the past, embracing their culture and language, and working hard toward a bright future.”

One of her most impactful accomplishments was her efforts in co-founding the Madre Latina Foundation, a non-profit based in Waterbury, CT whose mission is to provide “a platform where Latinas can learn, connect, be heard, grown, build a network, and be motivated to move forward!” This organization, that annually awards scholarships directed towards higher education, is just another example of Iglesias’ motivation and tireless work towards championing education, specifically in the lives of Latina and Latino students.

Luanelly Iglesias was one of 12 outstanding social justice heroes honored at NEA’s 2019 NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards, which took place on July 3, in Houston, Texas. Click on link to view video tribute of Iglesias.
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.