



Connecticut Immigrant & Refugee Coalition



## DENISE MERRILL

SECRETARY OF THE STATE  
CONNECTICUT

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For more information:  
Av Harris: (860) 509-6255  
Cell: (860) 463-5939

- PRESS RELEASE -

# SECRETARY MERRILL, GOVERNOR MALLOY JOIN CONNECTICUT IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE COALITION TO HONOR THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF IMMIGRANTS

WRITER AND PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH DR. JOSE GONZALEZ OF NEW LONDON  
GIVES KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR 16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL IMMIGRANT DAY CEREMONY

**HARTFORD:** Secretary of the State Denise Merrill and Governor Dannel P. Malloy today joined the Connecticut Immigrant and refugee Coalition (CIRC) in hosting the 16<sup>th</sup> annual “Immigrant Day” ceremony at the State Capitol in Hartford. Immigrant Day honors immigrants from Connecticut, and celebrates their long lasting contributions to their communities and professions. This year’s ceremony honored 17 immigrants originally from 15 different countries who live in Connecticut. A complete list of honorees can be found at the end of this news release.



“It is such an honor to pay tribute to hard working citizens who contribute so much to our communities who in some cases overcame very difficult circumstances to come to America, just like my family did 100 years ago,” said Secretary Merrill. “Our strength as a Democracy comes from our diversity and the fact that anyone – from anywhere in the world – can succeed in this country if you work hard enough. Each of those honored on Immigrant Day have not only done well for themselves and their families, but they have also had a lasting impact in their community. Our entire state has benefitted from their talent and tireless efforts.”

“In 2011 we stood together to pass Connecticut’s Dream Act—legislation that recognizes the potential in all of our young people and grants in-state tuition to undocumented students who attend college here,” said Governor Malloy. “I am proud to stand again with members of the immigrant who have chosen to build their lives in Connecticut—and in doing so have strengthened our economy, brightened our culture, and brought tremendous diversity to our communities.”

Secretary Merrill, Governor Malloy and other state dignitaries honored 17 immigrants from across the state, including this year’s keynote speaker Dr. Jose Gonzalez. Dr. Gonzalez was born in San Salvador, El Salvador and immigrated to New London, Connecticut at the age of eight. He knew no English and now holds a Ph.D. in English. Gonzalez has been featured as speaker at colleges, universities, and organizations through the US and has contributed to critical and nonfiction essays to several journals, to National Public Radio. He has received national and regional awards for his teaching. Jose infuses his presentations with a mix of poetry, humor and social commentary.

Secretary Merrill also joined Governor Malloy the CIRC in presenting the Myra M. Oliver Award to Carmila and Carolina Bortolletto, twin sisters from Danbury who are also very active in Connecticut Students4aDREAM. The Myra M. Oliver Award is given to those who work above and beyond the call of duty to help refugees and immigrants, in memory of Myra M. Oliver’s lifetime of leadership and service. The Bortolletto sisters are undocumented immigrants who were brought to Danbury from Brazil when they were nine years-old. Both sisters excelled in their studies in high school and both graduated with honors from Western Connecticut State University in 2010. They both helped lead an ultimately successful drive to enact legislation in 2011 that allows the children of undocumented immigrants in Connecticut to attend public colleges and universities at in-state tuition rates. The Bortolletto sisters continue to actively pursue similar legislation at the federal level.



Immigrant Day is sponsored by the Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (CIRC) and the Secretary of the State’s Office. CIRC is an association of ethnic and social service organizations working to promote the rights and opportunities of immigrants and refugees in Connecticut, and to foster their civic participation. Lucy Nalpathanchil, a news anchor and reporter for WNPR/Connecticut Public Broadcasting, Inc. and herself the daughter of immigrants from India, served as master of ceremonies for this year’s Immigrant Day observance.

**April 11, 2013 – 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Immigrant Day Honorees**

|  | <u>Country of Origin</u> | <u>CT Residence</u> |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <u><i>Keynote Speaker</i></u><br>Dr. Jose Gonzalez | El Salvador              | New London          |

**Honorees**

Regine Arouete

Oleg Elperin

Ishara Hakizimana (student)

Monika Krajewska

Hon. Maria Araujo Kahn

Hong Pho

Rashid Raji (student)

Madhu Reddy

Kishwar Rahman

Gideon Rutenberg

Rev. Dr. Augustus Sealy

Zaheer Sharaf

Trisana Spence (student)

Tsion Tesfasilasie

George P. Tsilfidis

Dr. Fiona Vernal

Belgium

Belarus

Congo, DRC

Poland

Angola

Vietnam

Nigeria

India

Pakistan

Israel

St. Lucia

Pakistan

Jamaica

Ethiopia

Greece

Jamaica

Fairfield

New London

New Haven

New Britain

Cheshire

Vernon

Hartford

South Windsor

Manchester

Bloomfield

Bloomfield

South Windsor

Hartford

New Haven

New Canaan

Manchester