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PRESS RELEASE

National Center for Law and Economic Justice celebrates its legacy fighting against the criminalization of poverty at Virtual Benefit on December 8

NCLEJ will honor trailblazers and advocates Sarah Dodds-Brown, Martha Morgan, Henry Sanders, and Faya Rose Touré

For Immediate Release

November 17, 2020 - National Center for Law and Economic Justice (NCLEJ) will host a virtual benefit celebration and awards ceremony on Tuesday, December 8, 2020 from 7-8pm EST. NCLEJ will highlight and honor the legacy of those fighting for economic justice with a series of awards to advocates and allies.

“In the midst of one of the greatest economic crises in U.S. history, we celebrate those leading the charge to end the relentless war on the poor and people of color,” said NCLEJ’s Executive Director Dennis Parker. “We work hand in hand with other advocates for justice for Black and brown communities and people with disabilities by increasing access to benefits, protecting workers’ rights, and fighting unlawful debt collection. This work has never been so crucial so we look to civil rights leaders who have paved the way, like our allies in Alabama Martha Morgan, Henry Sanders, and Faya Rose Touré.”

This year, NCLEJ will honor Sarah Dodds-Brown with the Corporate Counsel Leadership award. Dodds-Brown is the Executive Vice President & Managing Counsel at American Express and is active with educational and civic organizations. Over the course of a 15-year career with American Express, Dodds-Brown has redefined the culture and expanded the engagement of the legal function at American Express. She serves as an executive sponsor of the company’s Black Engagement Network employee affinity group, and is a strong advocate for meaningful corporate involvement in issues of racial and gender equity and other social justice issues.

NCLEJ will give Leaders in Social Justice Advocacy awards to three trailblazers fighting for Black communities in Alabama Martha Morgan, Henry Sanders, and Faya Rose Touré.

Professor Emerita of Law at the University of Alabama School of Law, Martha Morgan has taught and researched constitutional law, civil rights legislation, and women's international human rights. In Alabama, Morgan volunteered as an attorney to challenge the inadequacy and inequity of Alabama's public school system and served as an attorney for plaintiff schoolchildren in the desegregation case of Lee v. Macon County (Pickens County). Morgan is a founder and Vice-Chair of the Board of the Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth, and Reconciliation and is a Nonviolence Trainer there. She serves on the Steering Committee for Saving Ourselves Movement for Justice and Democracy and is a coordinating committee member for the Alabama Poor People's Campaign.

Henry Sanders founded, in 1971, a law firm that grew to be the largest Black law firm in Alabama and one of the ten largest in the country. Sanders practices law to help poor and Black people save their lands, protect people's constitutional rights, and challenge corporate abuse. Sanders was one of three lead counsel in the nationally known \$1.2 billion Black Farmers Discrimination Litigation. Sanders was elected to the Alabama Senate in 1983 making him the first African American State Senator from the Alabama Black Belt. He served in Senate for over thirty years, championing education, health care, tax reform and constitutional reform.

Civil rights activist and litigation attorney Faya Ora Rose Touré has worked on some of the highest-profile civil rights cases to come before the courts. Touré was the first African-American female judge in Alabama and served as municipal judge from 1973-1977. She was on legal team that won Pigford vs. Veneman, through which the U. S. Department of Agriculture paid more than a billion dollars in damages to Black farmers. A passionate activist for the Black community in Alabama for four decades, Touré has founded the National Voting Rights Museum, McRae Learning Center, Ancient Africa, Slavery and Civil War Museum, the Bridge Crossing Jubilee, 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement, and Black Belt Arts and Cultural Center.

Currently, Morgan, as co-counsel, and Sanders and Touré, as lead counsel, serve on the McCullough v. City of Montgomery debtors prison litigation fighting against the City of Montgomery, Alabama and Judicial Corrections Services, a private probation company.

In addition to tributes to the honorees, the Benefit will feature a conversation with Cory Booker, United States Senator for New Jersey and NCLEJ Executive Director Dennis Parker moderated by New York University Law Professor and NCLEJ Board Member Deborah Archer and a presentation by acclaimed spoken word artist/poet and Dartmouth College Professor Joshua Bennett.

Both a celebration and an event to raise funds to sustain NCLEJ, the virtual benefit is organized by Benefit Chairs Evan R. Chesler of Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP, Paul J. Shim of Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP, Ted Wells and Nina Mitchell Wells of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, as well as Co-Chairs and supported by NCLEJ's Benefit **Co-Chairs, Committee, and Board of Directors**.

ABOUT NCLEJ

The National Center for Law and Economic Justice advances economic justice for low-income families, individuals, and communities across the country. NCLEJ fights to protect access to critical benefits like food stamps, Medicaid, childcare, protect low-wage workers' rights and safety, advocates for the rights of people with disabilities, and fights unlawful debt collection. NCLEJ advocates for economic justice by winning strategic class action cases, representing marginalized individuals and communities, and changing federal and state legislation.

For more information on the virtual benefit and organizers,
visit <https://nclej.org/award-benefit>