

# Youth for Human Rights Recognizes Champions for Freedom at Awards Banquet

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, US, June 26, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- “[Youth for Human Rights] is for that 10-year-old kid that gets bullied at school, so that he can no longer feel afraid and starts speaking up,” said Niko Papaheraklis, the Programs Director of the Florida chapter of Youth for Human Rights (YHR). “It’s for that college girl who is harassed, so that she knows she doesn’t deserve it. Our material is created to help others speak up.”

Founded in 2001, YHR is an international non-profit organization, sponsored by the [Church of Scientology](#). YHR provides educational materials free of charge to educate the public on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and for anyone who wants to promote peace, tolerance and mutual respect among youth. Over a thousand people in Florida alone, from teachers to martial artists and community activists, use the YHR materials.



Dr. Peter Ndiang’ui, the Champion for Freedom awardee of 2019, (back row) proudly stands with his relatives and two other awardees (Mary Kimari and Rose Oginga - front left) of the 2019 Champions for Freedom YHR banquet.

“

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*Christopher King, CEO and founder of the Gentlemen's Course*

On June 22, over 200 of those said educators—from as far as Broward County and Miami—were in the Fort Harrison auditorium in Clearwater for the first annual Champions for Freedom Awards Banquet. They came to acknowledge educators who teach human rights and to present the “Champion for Freedom of the Year” award.

Papaheraklis read UDHR #29, “Responsibility”, to the crowd: “We have a duty to other people, and we should protect their rights and freedoms.”

Together, Papaheraklis and the Executive Director of YHR Florida, Cristian Vargas, acknowledged 22 educators as “Human Rights Champions” for taking that responsibility to heart and dedicatedly teaching human rights.

The guest speaker of the evening was a longtime partner of YHR Florida, grandson of the late Blues legend BB King, two-time recipient of the President's Volunteer Service Award and founder of the non-profit, The Gentlemen's Course, Christopher King. He repeated Human Right #29 "Responsibility". King, who has educated over 10,000 youth in the last five years, said, "All humans have a responsibility to protect others and their rights."



Niko Papaharaklis and Cristian Vargas of YHR Florida bookend Champions for Freedom award winners - L-R: Joseph Haber, Yvette Jones, Lided Cerda; and Sara Pierce on June 22 at the Fort Harrison.

Moving on to the final award presentation, Vargas said going through the applications was an extremely hard task for YHR Florida staff, but in the end one person "stands out and deserves to be praised for their years of relentless dedication and resolute passion."

Dr. Peter Ndiang'ui, the Champion for Freedom awardee of 2019, has been teaching human rights for over seven years and collaborated with youth from Turkey, Japan, Kenya, Egypt and Malawi to enlighten more than 50,000 people on their inalienable rights. "I'm not one of those people who are short of words," he said, looking around on stage in disbelief, "but right now I am."

"I was born in a small village in Kenya and I used to walk seven miles to get to school every day. I still consider myself to be that kind of person." Dr. Ndiang'ui has now been living in Fort Myers, Florida for 20 years. He is the president of the African Network of Southwest Florida, a non-profit organization which is a support system for African immigrants settling in to life in Southwest Florida.

As the event came to a close with a concert performed by the Flag Band, five-time, super-light heavyweight kickboxing world champion, Olando Rivera, was seen making a bee-line for the presentation tables. "I'm really glad that I got to see the awards tonight. I'm going to get all of the literature!" he said. Just like Rivera, dozens of other educators joined the YHR Florida Facebook group and got their free educator kit at a booth right outside the auditorium.

Dr. Ndiang'ui told Freedom, "Human rights are common sense. It is to love one another, to not shoot each other and not pick on their religious beliefs and other things about them."

Youth for Human Rights (YHR):

Youth for Human Rights International (YHRI) is a nonprofit organization founded in 2001 by Dr. Mary Shuttleworth, an educator born and raised in apartheid South Africa, where she witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of discrimination and the lack of basic human rights.

The purpose of YHRI is to teach youth about human rights, specifically the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and inspire them to become advocates for tolerance and peace. YHRI has now grown into a global movement, including hundreds of groups, clubs and chapters around the world.

YHR materials include the UNITED music video with a street-savvy, multiethnic, anti-bullying message; 30 short public service message videos depicting the 30 articles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and What are Human Rights? booklets delineating those 30 articles in simple, everyday language. With these, YHR has reached millions from diverse backgrounds all over the world. It was humanitarian [L. Ron Hubbard](#) who said, "Human Rights must be made a fact, not an idealistic dream."

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