

Three Trailblazers to receive Diversity Awards

By **Brandon J. Vogel**

The Committee on Diversity and Inclusion will honor three attorneys, who are at different stages of their careers, with the Diversity Trailblazer Award for their efforts to advance equal participation of minorities in the legal profession.

The “Changemaker”, “Lifetime Achievement” and “One to Watch” awards will be presented at the Celebrating Diversity reception on January 23 held during the State Bar’s Annual Meeting.

The winners are:

- **Changemaker**—Paul T. Williams, Jr. of Albany (president and chief executive officer, New York State Dormitory Authority);
- **Lifetime Achievement**—Professor Jenny Rivera (founding director of the Center on Latino and Latina Rights Equality at City University of New York School of Law);
- **One to Watch**—Joseph M. Hanna of Buffalo (partner, Goldberg Segalla LLP).

Changemaker

Williams, the first African-American president of the Dormitory Authority, is being recognized for chairing then-Governor David Paterson’s Executive Order 10 Task Force.

Governor Paterson established the task force to make better use of Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) professional firms. Under Williams’ leadership, the task force increased opportunities for MWBE firms to serve as legal counsel to the issuers of state-supported debt and other public authorities.

The task force issued its recommendations in 2009. They were included in the 2010 Business Diversification Act, signed by Paterson that created diversity standards and goals for all legal firms seeking state contracts.

Williams previously served on the New York State Committee on Diversity in the Legal Profession and the New York State Task Force on Judicial Diversity.

Lifetime Achievement

Rivera founded City University of New York’s Center on Latino and Latina Rights and Equality (CLORE) in 2008. CLORE melds community service and educational activities to improve the quality of legal care provided to Latinos and Latinas in New York City, the state, and the nation.

Rivera organizes and moderates CLORE’s annual seminar, “Supreme Court Review: Impact on the Latino Community and Practitioners.” Last summer, she hosted high school students at CUNY Law School’s summer law school program.

She also is a commissioner and reporter for the American Bar Association Commission on Hispanic Legal Rights & Responsibilities. For the commission, she has helped plan regional hearings throughout the nation, where members of the Latino community testify about issues affecting them and how to address them. Issues include voting rights, immigration, civil rights and access to justice.

Rivera has taught at CUNY School of Law since 1997. At one point, she was the only tenured Latina law professor in New York. She took a leave of absence in 2007 to serve as New York’s special deputy attorney general for civil rights, where she helped design and implement then-Attorney General Andrew Cuomo’s civil rights agenda. Earlier, at the Southern District of New York District Court, Rivera was a law clerk for then-U.S. District Judge Sonia Sotomayor, now an associate justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Rivera received the 2010 Kay Crawford Murray Award from the State Bar Committee on Women in the Law.

One to Watch

Joseph M. Hanna, president of the Minority Bar Association of Western New York (MBAWNY), has spearheaded numerous initiatives to advance diversity within the legal profession.

In 2008, he created Success in the City, an annual networking event that promotes diversity, creates mentor-protégé relationships and facilitates recruiting opportunities in law and business.

The first event attracted 140 attendees. The 2011 event drew nearly 500 political and business leaders, legal professionals and students. Success in the City has been replicated in Baltimore, Cleveland, Birmingham, and Dallas.

Hanna also established a diversity-focused internship program for MBAWNY in partnership with the University at Buffalo Law School, his alma mater. The program has placed more than 25 students in clerkships with judges and large law firms throughout Western New York.

Hanna serves as chair of Goldberg Segalla’s Diversity Task Force and has been recognized for his diversity-relat-

ed leadership by the American Bar Association (ABA), the University at Buffalo Law School and the Buffalo Niagara Human Resources Association. He is editor-in-chief of the ABA’s Minority Trial Lawyer newsletter, and has written numerous articles on diversity and the law.

Hanna received the State Bar Young Lawyers Section’s 2010 Outstanding Young Lawyer Award. ♦

Vogel is NYSBA’s Media Writer.



Williams



Hanna



Rivera