



137-139 West 25th Street  
12th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
(212) 627-2227  
[www.thenyic.org](http://www.thenyic.org)

*For Immediate Release*

*Monday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014*

*Press Contact: Thanu Yakupitiyage  
212-627-2227 x235; cell: 413-687-5160  
[tyaku@thenyic.org](mailto:tyaku@thenyic.org)*

## Coalition Honors Leaders from Diverse Sectors at Annual Gala

---

*(New York, NY)* On Monday evening at the elegant *Capitale* venue on Manhattan's Lower East Side, three hundred individuals representing community organizations, labor groups, faith organizations, businesses, and government gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of the New York Immigration Coalition. The "Builders of the *New New York*" Awards, the annual gala held by the NYIC, honored four key leaders from diverse sectors who have contributed tremendously to improving the livelihoods of immigrant communities.

In his welcome to guests, **Steven Choi, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition**, said, "We are delighted to gather this evening to celebrate our accomplishments, thank our nearly 200 members from across the state, and honor the work of four exceptional individuals whose vision and passion for supporting immigrants has helped all of our communities.

"This gala marks my one-year anniversary as executive director of the NYIC, and it's been an inspiring year for me. Since last June, we've reached a major milestone by serving our 20,000th immigrant New Yorker through our comprehensive consular ID initiative, and worked with the City, the State and thirty of our member agencies to educate nearly three thousand of New York's most marginalized immigrants about Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). We've registered nearly 5,000 new citizen voters, and showed the power and spirit of immigrant New York by mobilizing nearly ten thousand people for a historic march for immigration reform over the Brooklyn Bridge last October. Kudos to our amazing, staff and member agencies!"

The first award of the night was presented to **Jacques Brand, CEO of Deutsche Bank North America** by **New York City Councilmember Carlos Menchaca**. Mr. Brand was honored for spearheading the launch of the ground-breaking "Anchoring Achievement in Mexican Communities" initiative that has shined a spotlight on one of New York's critically underserved immigrant communities.

In his acceptance speech, Mr. Brand said, "The initiatives of the Coalition ensure that all of our communities share in the success of New York through equal rights and access to housing, employment and most of all education – one of the most critical elements to success." He also discussed his own experience growing up as an immigrant in New York City and added, "We will continue to support the important work of the NYIC to ensure every one of these immigrant communities has an opportunity to grow and thrive."

**Hector Figueroa, president of 32BJ Service Employees International Union (SEIU)** presented the second award to **Eliseo Medina, international secretary-treasurer of SEIU**, for his distinguished career as a leader of the organized labor and immigrant rights movements and for his bold efforts, including a 31-day fast, to urge Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform.

**Mr. Medina** said, “I am honored and humbled to receive this award from the New York Immigrant Coalition, one of the premier organizations in America. Together we’ll keep fighting for and win immigration reform. It’s not a question of *if*, but *when*.”

And **New York City Councilmember Margaret Chin** presented **Parkin Lee, senior vice-president, chief legal officer and secretary of The Rockefeller Group** with a Builders award for playing a key role in advancing opportunities among growing Asian Pacific immigrant communities, including creating a prestigious law scholarship for minority students.

Upon accepting the award, **Mr. Lee** said, “I am humbled and honored to be recognized by the New York Immigration Coalition, whose work on behalf of those who come to this country seeking to add their efforts to the growth and prosperity of the United States is critically important to the future of us all.”

The final award of the night, a Special Lifetime Achievement Award, was presented to former Manhattan District Attorney, **Robert Morgenthau**, for more than three decades of outstanding public service, and for his outspoken support of immigration reform and critique of the administration’s deportation system.

**Mr. Morgenthau** said, “I accept this Special Lifetime Achievement Award from the New York Immigration Coalition with an eye on the great amount of work that we must all continue to do to ensure that Congress does their solemn duty and reforms the laws so that immigrants are treated fairly and rationally. The U.S immigration laws and their heavy-handed enforcement are a national disgrace and I know we can do better as a nation.”

The Coalition enters its next phase of actions this week starting with a human chain of solidarity on Saturday, June 28<sup>th</sup>, the National Day to Stop Separating Families.

###

*[The New York Immigration Coalition-NYIC-](#) is an umbrella policy and advocacy organization for nearly 200 groups in New York State that work with immigrants and refugees. The NYIC aims to achieve a fairer and more just society that values the contributions of immigrants and extends opportunity to all by promoting immigrants’ full civic participation, fostering their leadership, and providing a unified voice and a vehicle for collective action for New York’s diverse immigrant communities.*