



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Immigrant Rights Advocate Wins 2008 Morris Dees Justice Award

Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP & Affiliates and The University of Alabama School of Law announced today that Cheryl Little, Esq., of Miami, has been awarded the 2008 Morris Dees Justice Award. The award will be presented in New York on November 20, 2008.

New York, NY – Today Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP & Affiliates and The University of Alabama School of Law announced that Cheryl Little, Executive Director of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center (FIAC), a not-for-profit legal assistance organization in Miami, has been awarded the 2008 Morris Dees Justice Award.

Morris Dees will present the award during a reception at Skadden, Arps' offices in New York on November 20, 2008.

The Morris Dees Justice Award was created in 2006 by Skadden, Arps and The University of Alabama School of Law to honor Dees, an Alabama graduate, for his life-long devotion to public service. The award is given annually to a lawyer who has devoted his or her career to serving the public interest and pursuing justice, and whose work has brought about positive change in the community, state, or nation. The first award recipient, in 2006, was United States District Judge William Wayne Justice, of the Eastern District of Texas. Last year's winner was Arthur N. Read, General Counsel for Friends of Farmworkers, Inc., based in Philadelphia.

The Selection Committee recognized Ms. Little, who is considered one of the country's leading experts on immigration law, for her dedication to upholding the rights of immigrants throughout her professional career, which spans more than two decades.

Ms. Little's nomination for the Morris Dees Justice Award was submitted by Rev. Dr. Greta S. Reed and was subsequently joined by letters of support from a host of colleagues, legal organizations, and admirers. The breadth of backing on behalf of Ms. Little extended well beyond the legal sector and represented a diverse cross-section of ardent professional and personal endorsements.

As Rev. Dr. Reed noted in her nomination of Ms. Little, “My sense of despair – especially over the plight of Haitian refugees – gave way to hope, because someone named Cheryl Little, whom I have never met, worked tirelessly and with passion and intelligence to stand with and for the most powerless and desperate people imaginable. The Morris Dees Justice Award has been established to honor someone just like Cheryl Little.”

After graduating from law school with honors in 1985, Little became counsel for the Haitian Refugee Center. She co-founded the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center in 1996 and currently serves as the agency’s Executive Director.

In 12 years under her leadership, FIAC has grown from 10 employees with a budget of \$400,000 to 49 employees in three offices with a budget in excess of \$4 million.

Little and her staff have taken the lead in monitoring conditions of Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention. She has documented serious concerns regarding the physical and sexual abuse of detainees at Miami’s Krome Detention Center, which led to two FBI and high-level Department of Justice investigations. Dozens of detainees were released and several officers who sexually abused female detainees were convicted.

Furthermore, Little was instrumental in calling attention to complaints that immigrant detainees at Florida’s Jackson County Jail were shackled to concrete slabs, beaten with batons, and shocked with electric shock shields. All of the detainees were removed from the jail, and the Justice Department issued a scathing report confirming these concerns.

ICE officials, both locally and nationally, have sought input from Ms. Little regarding detention issues. The senior counsel for INS’ Office of Field Operations, Detention, and Deportation, said, “Cheryl Little has her fingers on the pulse of the people we have in detention...She is the key to our success. My goal is to know about detention problems before Cheryl calls me.”

Ms. Little is regularly called on to testify about the plight of immigrants before assemblies such as the Organization of American States InterAmerican Commission on Human Rights, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and the U.S. House and Senate Immigration Subcommittees.

She has been featured in award winning documentaries including Jonathan Demme’s “Killing the Dream,” “Black and White in Exile,” “They Call Us Boat People,” and “Abandoned: The Betrayal of America’s Immigrants.”

National television shows have sought out Ms. Little’s expertise, and she has discussed immigration issues on *60 Minutes*, *Nightline*, *The McNeil-Lehrer Report*, *PBS’s News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, *Frontline*, *The Today Show*, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, and CNN.

For her dedication and successes on behalf of Haitian refugees, the government of Haiti made her an honorary citizen in May 2002.

Ms. Little, the 2008 Morris Dees Justice Award winner, was selected by a distinguished committee:

- **Julian Bond**, Chairman of the Board, NAACP
- **Professor Norman Dorsen**, New York University School of Law
- **Professor Bryan Fair**, The University of Alabama School of Law
- **Kathryn O. Greenberg**, Founder, New York Legal Assistance Group
- **Judge William Wayne Justice**, 2006 Dees Award Winner
- **Helen B. Kim**, Partner, Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP
- **Susan Butler Plum**, Director, Skadden Fellowship Program
- **Dean Kenneth C. Randall**, The University of Alabama School of Law
- **Robert C. Sheehan**, Executive Partner, Skadden, Arps
- **Marsha E. Simms**, Partner, Weil, Gotshal, & Manges LLP
- **Tari D. Williams**, The University of Alabama School of Law
- **Vaughn C. Williams**, Partner, Skadden, Arps

A sculpture to commemorate the award was created by Jillian Crochet, a University of Alabama art student. Crochet won the competition to design the award.

Dees is the Co-Founder and Chief Trial Counsel for the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. The Center is internationally known for tracking hate groups and extremist activity, conducting tolerance training education and winning cases against white supremacists. Dees is a 1960 graduate of The University of Alabama School of Law.

More information about the award is available at www.morrisdeesaward.com.

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