



SUSAN BYSIEWICZ
SECRETARY OF THE STATE
CONNECTICUT

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- NEWS RELEASE -

BYSIEWICZ JOINS CONNECTICUT IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE COALITION TO HONOR 16 IMMIGRANTS WHO HAVE MADE REMARKABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONNECTICUT

AUTHOR/FILMMAKER ROYA HAKAKIAN GIVES KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR 12TH
ANNUAL CEREMONY

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz today joined the Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (CIRC) in hosting the 12th annual “Immigrant Day” at the State Capitol to honor immigrants from throughout Connecticut who have made valuable contributions to their communities and/or professions. In addition, three Connecticut students were also recognized for their winning essays entitled “Why we Came and What We Brought.”

“Immigrants are the mortar and glue that built this country and made it strong,” said Bysiewicz, whose family immigrated to the United States from Poland and Greece in the early 20th century. “I hope this Immigrant Day encourages all residents to pause and recognize the vital role immigrants have had, and continue to have, in Connecticut. I congratulate all the honorees and their families.”

Secretary Bysiewicz joined in honoring 16 immigrants from 14 different countries in the Old Judiciary Room on the 3rd Floor of the State Capitol. A complete list of honorees can be found at the end of the news release.

This year’s keynote speaker and honoree was Roya Hakakian from Iran. Born and raised in a Jewish family in Tehran, Ms. Hakakian was granted political asylum in the United States in May 1985. Since then, she has collaborated on numerous broadcast and print journalism projects for programs such as “60 Minutes” of CBS News. Her most recent film, “[Armed and Innocent](#),” about the involvement of underage children in wars around the world, was commissioned by UNICEF and was a nominee for best short documentary at several international festivals. Her opinion columns, essays, and book reviews appear in English language publications including

the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*. She is also a contributor to the Weekend Edition of NPR's *All Things Considered*. Hakakian was listed among the leading new voices in Persian poetry in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*.

Roya Hakakian is the recipient of the 2008 Guggenheim fellowship in nonfiction and a fellow at Yale University's Whitney Humanities Center. She is a founding member of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, and serves on the board of Refugees International. Hakakian speaks on the Middle East and human rights and has appeared on CSPAN-Book TV, CNN International, CBS Early Show, and Now with Bill Moyers.

“I am very excited to honor so many deserving men, women, and students who have been chosen as the awardees for the 12th Connecticut Immigrant Day. The Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition advocates for fair and just policies affecting refugees and immigrants who have made this country and our state of Connecticut a shining example of cultural diversity for the entire world,” commented Robert J. Fishman, President of the Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (CIRC) and Executive Director of the Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut (JFACT).

Immigrant Day is an annual event sponsored by the Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (CIRC) and the Secretary of the State’s Office. The general public may RSVP by contacting Robert Fishman at (860) 727-5701 or jfact@mcmgmt.com.

April 14, 2009 - Twelfth Annual Immigrant Day Honorees

	<u>Country of Origin</u>	<u>CT Residence</u>
<u>Keynote Speaker</u>		
Ms. Roya Hakakian	Iran	Woodbridge
<u>Honorees</u>		
Dr. Lenka Babuska	Czech Republic	Glastonbury
Mr. Wayne Benjamin	Guyana	Windsor
Ms. Amalia Vazquez Bzdyra	Cuba	Wallingford
Reverend Panteleimon & Mrs. Kallirroe Fatsis	Greece	Dayville
Rep. Tony Hwang	Taiwan-China	Fairfield
Dr. Shyling Lee	China	Farmington
Ms. Wanda Nowakowska	Poland	New Britain
Reverend Charles Okang	Ghana	West Haven
Mr. Niphakone & Mrs. Soumana Pathammavong	Laos	Bridgeport
Lea Rubenstein	Czech Republic	West Hartford
Dr. Hariharan Swaminathan	Malaysia	Storrs
Mrs. Carleen Taylor	Jamaica	West Hartford
Agnes M. Vertes	Hungary	Weston
Ms. Olia Marie Yelner	Ukraine	Trumbull

“Why We Came and What We Brought,”

Student Essay Contest Winners

1 st Place	Sarah Caisse
2 nd Place	Alyssa Campochario
3 rd Place	Aaron Dillon