

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Rian Immigrant Center celebrated its Solas Awards by demonstrating solidarity with humanitarian efforts across the globe**

**BOSTON, MA October 19, 2020** - The Rian Immigrant Center (formerly known as the Irish International Immigrant Center) hosted its 31st Solas Awards Celebration on October 15th, the first virtual Solas Awards Celebration, and the first celebration under the Center's new name. In total more than \$650,000 was raised for immigration legal, education and resource and support services.

Each year, Rian presents the Solas Award to inspirational individuals whose work resonates with their vision of building a society where all people are welcomed, valued and enjoy equal opportunity and protection.

Rian works with immigrants and refugees from around the world to provide support as they arrive in Massachusetts, from legal representation to English classes. Many of the families Rian serves have made harrowing journeys to the U.S. to escape life-threatening situations. They have traveled in caravans through Central America and Mexico. Others have attempted to cross the Mediterranean on boats that are barely seaworthy.

This year, Rian honored the *Luventa 10*, the crew of a search-and-rescue ship that saved 14,000 people on the Mediterranean before being seized by Italian authorities in 2017. For three years, prosecutors in Italy have been building a criminal case against the crew, whom they accuse of aiding illegal migration. If tried, members of the crew face 20 years in prison for saving people's lives.

"We rarely hear about those journeys immigrants take, risking their lives in search of a better life," said executive director Ronnie Millar. "Rian sees the *Luventa 10* as partners, fighting for the same cause to which they've devoted themselves at Rian: to protect and support people seeking refuge."

The other honorees were Des Mac Intyre, Chair and CEO of Mellon, Philanthropists and founders of Fish Family Foundation, Atsuko and Larry Fish, and immigrant, teacher and mother, Ngozi Okoye.

The event also included a musical performance by the Irish duo, Saint Sister, and poet and human rights activist Carolyn Forché shared a recent poem.

Millar continued, "I am deeply grateful for our sponsors, board members, host committee and staff. I stand here tonight bearing witness to their commitment, expertise and deep care for the immigrant families we serve. Deep gratitude to each and every one of them."

The Rian Immigrant Center stands in solidarity with *Luventa10* and in collaboration with WBUR, Brookline Booksmith and New England International Donors, is hosting a community conversation: Solidarity at Sea

and on Land with Iuventa10. The virtual event is scheduled for Monday, October 19 at 12:00 PM, and will be moderated by Shannon Dooling, WBUR and will feature Iuventa10 crew member, Miguel Duarte. Click [here](#) to RSVP.

As the late Chief Justice Ralph Gants said, “We seek to repair the world, sometimes even save the world, one person at a time. What that means is that we will step up to the plate and seek to address the challenging problems that come before us.”

As we move into a potentially uncertain and turbulent time ahead, let’s steer the course, together,” concluded Millar.