

## 2015 Racial Justice Award Honorees

InterFaith Works is proud to honor the accomplishments and achievements of Francis McMillan Parks, Lisa Alford, and Ranya Shannon, for their work towards ending racism and promoting social equity. They will be honored on Wednesday, February 25, 2015, 5:30 p.m. at Syracuse Stage. The ceremony will be followed by Syracuse Stage's production of *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* at 7:30 p.m.

The suggested ticket donation is \$30 - \$150 (any gift over \$30 is tax deductible). For reservations contact Kathy Ferro at (315) 449-3552, ext.119, or email [kferro@interfaithworkscny.org](mailto:kferro@interfaithworkscny.org), by Wednesday, February 11.



A lifelong passion for social justice for all citizens has led **Francis McMillan Parks** to an extensive teaching career in colleges and universities throughout the United States and Europe. Ms. Parks' lifelong passion for education has been manifested in her roles as educator and community volunteer. As a daughter of school teachers during the era of segregated public schools in Texas, she believes that social justice is to be achieved through strategies of schooling throughout one's lifetime.

Throughout her professional career she has been an advocate of lifelong learning. Additionally, as a citizen and as an African-American Woman, through community service she has "lifted" the ideals of women to include Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Phyllis Wheatley, Mary McLeod Bethune, Ida B. Wells, Dorothy Irene Height, Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Louise Parks, and Mary Church Terrell.

As a passionate storyteller and one who believes in Storytelling as an educational strategy which should be extended to all generations, Parks has told stories of historical significance in churches, schools, universities, festivals, libraries, and museums throughout the country. During her tenure at Syracuse University, she founded the Sojourner Storytelling Conference, which was held annually in February to celebrate stories of peace, justice and freedom.

Prior to retiring from Syracuse University in 2008, after 25 years, Ms. Parks served as Director of Students Offering Service and African American Programs at Hendricks Chapel. She is the recipient of several prestigious awards including the New York State Award to Women, The Chancellor's Citation (Syracuse University), and The Peacemaker's Award. At Syracuse University, an annual award was established in her honor and named "The Francis McMillan Parks Women of Influence" Award.

A Texan, who attended graduate school at Atlanta University at the beginning of the era of the Montgomery Improvement Association, she was privileged to meet Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Reverend Ralph David Abernathy to engage them in conversations about the Movement.

Her grandson is Durham Xavier who was named to honor her maternal grandfather, Bruce Durham, an early feminist. Ms. Parks remembers that her grandparents were required, as a condition for voting, to pay the onerous poll tax!

Parks is privileged to serve on the Board of the Community Folk Art Center, as well as the Board of the Erie Canal Museum.

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**Lisa Dunn Alford** has spent her adult life dedicated toward ending racism and promoting social equity. Her personal and professional life personifies this goal by her consistent actions and deeds.

Lisa is immediate past President of the Syracuse Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (AKA), Inc. and continues to serve on its Board. Consistent with the sorority goals, community service and engagement have been the cornerstone of her adult life. Through her leadership, Lisa works tirelessly to carry out their national goals, which include health, economic security, and social justice and human rights. Lisa, through AKA, engages our community by sponsoring events such as “Silence is NOT Golden”, presented to discuss the stigma of mental health in minority communities; working with the United Way and the Greater Syracuse Labor Council in presenting the 14th Annual MLK Day of Service Clothing & Food Drive, and serving as a committee member on League of Women Voters promoting the importance of getting to the polls.

Lisa has been with Onondaga County government since 2007, serving as Commissioner of the Department of Aging and Youth, and now as Deputy Commissioner of the expanded Department of Adult and Long Term Care Services. A decisive leader, Lisa has guided several new services that focus on outreach to underserved groups, thereby helping to meet the diversity of need of our eclectic older adult community. She uses her time effectively to serve on community boards, including the local chapter of the American Heart Association and the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York. Through these organizations and many others, Lisa continues her role as advocate in closing health disparities among communities of color, young and old.

Lisa has received numerous awards for her passion and compassion, including the P.E.A.C.E., Inc. Champion of Diversity Community Service Award, the YWCA Diversity Achiever Award, and the Community Service Award bestowed by the Junior League of Syracuse.

A remarkable quality about Lisa is her desire to mentor young women of color. She always makes herself available to help guide and support women coming up in our community that will also value the meaning of racial justice and working to promote social equity.



**Ranya Shannon** is currently a senior at Nottingham High School. She has attended Seeds of Peace summer camp twice and continues to build on the leadership and negotiation skills she developed while at Seeds in Maine. Through Seeds, Shannon has also had the privilege of attending a 3 day Harvard Negotiation and Mediation Seminar as well as speaking at the United Nations on International Peace Day about the work she was doing in Syracuse. She has also been a part of Community Wide Dialogue for two years, an intense dialogue program that bridges the gaps between Syracuse’s inner city and suburban high schools.