



RAYNA & MARVIN MILLER COMMUNITY JUSTICE AWARD JEAN R. CLELAND SOCIAL ACTION AWARD

2014 Nomination Form



Marvin & Rayna Miller at Open Communities' 1995 Homeseekers' Fair



Jean Cleland dedicates monument to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the Winnetka Village Green, July 25, 2007.

Since 2008, Open Communities has bestowed an annual award to recognize the outstanding achievements of north suburban individuals to bring about inclusive, diverse, and integrated suburbs.

Open Communities recognizes that the obstacle to diverse communities is an atmosphere of exclusivity, exacerbated by costly and unequal access to housing, quality education, transportation networks, jobs, youth programming and cultural amenities. Since 1972, Open Communities has served as a vehicle for residents of all backgrounds to come together to prevent displacement and act as an advocate for equitable policies in housing, economic and social justice. Our vision is simple: Communities are richer when those who give to the northern suburbs also live here.

On June 10, 2014, we will honor the fifth recipient of the Rayna and Marvin Miller Community Justice Award, and the fourth recipient of the newly renamed Jean R. Cleland Social Action Award. We invite your nominations. You may nominate more than one person for an award; however, we kindly request that you submit each nomination separately. **Nomination forms are due by February 15, 2014.**

Purpose:

- To recognize an individual/individuals who took bold steps for open communities over the past year, hopefully but not necessarily resulting in concrete changes in Chicago's northern suburbs.
- To encourage "yes, in my backyard" activism.
- To lend prestige to local activism.
- To raise awareness that fighting racism on the North Shore is still very much needed and relevant.
- To recognize a person or persons who can serve as an example to other communities.
- To encourage justice-oriented activism ; to have the award recipient recognized as an "ambassador" of conscience throughout the northern suburbs

Eligibility:

- The nominee must be a resident of Deerfield, Evanston, Glencoe, Glenview, Highland Park, Highwood, Kenilworth, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Niles, Northbrook, Northfield, Park Ridge, Skokie, Wilmette, or Winnetka.
- The nominee must be an individual or group of individuals whose achievement was in a volunteer capacity, not tied to their job. Outstanding achievement is understood to result from activities that advance the cause of housing, economic, or social justice through the nominee's creative and courageous actions.



Rayna and Marvin Miller



Rayna Miller, presiding over the 10th anniversary (1982) of our original incarnation, the North Shore Interfaith Housing Council.



Marvin Miller, at the Wilmette home of Mary Sample in 2002, reflecting on the agency's founding.

Rayna Miller (1928-2001) was a champion for fairness in housing throughout her life. She was among a group of Wilmette women who started the North Shore Summer Project in 1961, a grassroots movement to fight institutional racism and anti-Semitism in the housing market whose high point was a 1965 rally featuring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., attracting more than 10,000 supporters on the Winnetka Village Green. In 1974, Rayna became executive director of the North Shore Interfaith Housing Council, Open Communities' original incarnation. A courageous woman, Rayna was heckled for her leadership in assisting African Americans of all incomes to move to the North Shore and for advocating for affordable senior, family, and group housing throughout the area. Her strong character, commitment and charisma drew hundreds of individual supporters and congregations to Open Communities. Her community activism extended to the League of Women Voters of Wilmette, where she served as president, the New Trier Township Health and Human Services Committee, and the Wilmette Housing Commission.

Marvin Miller (1925-2008) was equally a champion for racial justice, women's rights, and peace. Marvin was not only a founder of Open Communities with his wife Rayna, but he was a long-time activist for all progressive causes including the League of Women Voters of Wilmette, where he was the first man to be an official member, New Trier Democrats, the Chicago Area Peace Action (formerly North Suburban Peace Initiative), and the Wilmette Community Relations Commission.

The Millers' credo can be summed up in Rayna's words: *"If you have the spirit to struggle, you will have the power to prevail."*



Open Communities was founded in 1972 by local activists including Rayna and Marvin Miller and Jean Cleland, with roots in the Civil Rights Movement. Open Communities' mission is to educate, advocate and organize to promote just and inclusive communities in north suburban Chicago. Its membership includes residents, congregations and civic organizations. A not-for-profit organization formerly known as the Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs, its free and confidential services include investigating fair housing discrimination and landlord/tenant complaints, foreclosure and predatory lending counseling and prevention, Homesharing, immigrant leadership development, education justice, fair housing education and affordable housing advocacy, and grassroots organizing.



Jean R. Cleland



Jean Cleland in 2003. At right, with Rayna Miller in 1982 at the 10th annual meeting of the North Shore Interfaith Housing Council, receiving an award for successfully achieving Wilmette's first low-income housing development, Gates Manor, and untiring advocacy as chair of the Village's Housing Commission and as lay leader in her church.

Jean R. Cleland (1923-2013) personified the phrase, "If you want peace, work for justice." Jean was a life-long line leader against racial discrimination. She was an active member of the North Shore Summer Project. She and her husband Bob were early fair housing testers and actively assisted African Americans to move to Wilmette and neighboring suburbs. Jean never shied away from controversy, from doing what was right, what was "open-minded and enlightened" – "what Jesus would want me to be doing" – ever since her childhood in Cincinnati where she befriended African Americans at an interracial high school.

Jean was a founder with Rayna and Marvin Miller of what is now Open Communities in 1972, and worked for the North Shore Senior Center for over 35 years until her passing. Jean chaired the Wilmette Housing Commission when the Village created it in 1977 and was instrumental in pushing through two major housing initiatives for seniors: Gates Manor, the suburb's first low-income rental building, built on land owned by her church at the time, First Congregational U.C.C., and the Housing Assistance Program. With her husband Bob, who died in 2010, she helped found Chicago Area Peace Action (then, the North Suburban Peace Initiative). Always active, in 1999, she brokered a community meeting between motel residents threatened with displacement and the Village Board of Morton Grove, ending in handshakes and humility. Several years later, she and Marvin Miller helped organize the ad hoc Mixed Use for Mallinckrodt campaign in Wilmette, and succeeded in getting an affordable housing set-aside in that historic building, initially threatened with demolition.

Jean and Bob were about, and embodied, welcome. Whether it was as a large family with six children, as next-door neighbors, as community, interfaith and church leaders, or as people who would shelter families during the Sanctuary Movement, they were clear, grounded, and warm. Both of them lived the credo, "To those whom much is given, much is expected."

Jean Cleland is an example to all who seek inspiration from people of faith or high moral principle in the difficult but most deeply essential cause of racial and economic justice.



Miller Community Justice Award 2014 Nomination Form

This nomination is for... (*check one*):

___ **Rayna & Marvin Miller Community Justice Award** - to recognize the outstanding achievements of north suburban individuals to bring about diverse and inclusive communities in their own back yards.

___ **Jean R. Cleland Social Action Award** – to recognize those who took action one family at a time.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PERSON(S) YOU ARE NOMINATING:

Nominee Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City/Zip code: _____ E-Mail: _____

Daytime Phone: _____

Occupation/Avocation: _____

INFORMATION ABOUT YOU:

Nominator: _____ Affiliation (if any): _____

Street Address: _____

City/Zip code: _____ E-Mail: _____

Daytime Phone: _____

Signature of Nominator and Date: _____

Please limit your responses to all three questions to no more than 2 pages.

1. Please describe your relationship to the nominee(s).
2. Please list specific, concrete activities that demonstrate the nominee's leadership in promoting just, diverse and inclusive communities in any or all of Chicago's northern suburbs in one or more of the following areas: housing, transportation, youth programs, job opportunities, cultural amenities, immigration reform, environmental improvement, or education.
3. Please describe why you believe this nominee's work was extraordinary and deserves this recognition. In addition, please explain the positive impact, change or improvement made by the nominee(s) in promoting cooperation and understanding among people of different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, as well as those of differing levels of ability.

Please return your completed nomination form by e-mail by February 15, 2014 to the "Rayna & Marvin Miller Award Committee," c/o Open Communities, at info@open-communities.org. Thank you!