



Champions of Democracy Awards Reception
Tuesday, October 12, 2010, 6:30 – 9:30 pm
Mayflower Hotel, 1127 Connecticut Avenue, NW

Champions of Democracy 2010



Smith Bagley, businessman, philanthropist and political activist, devoted most of his life to supporting social justice causes like civil rights, global democracy and international human rights. As the president of the Arca Foundation, he consistently supported countless progressive, cutting-edge organizations including DC Vote. Smith suffered a severe stroke and passed away peacefully at the age of 74 in January 2010.

Congresswoman Donna Edwards (D-MD) explains, “I most admired Smith because he lived in declaratory sentences—straightforward, honest and open. He taught me to think big and without conventional boundaries. He taught me to take risks.”

In DC Vote’s final meeting with Smith, he urged us to “fight for statehood – go for the whole thing, Ilir!” In classic fashion, his ideas were both bold and prescient. Just months after this conversation, the DC Vote Board expanded our mission and chose steps to full democracy and statehood as our next campaign.

Kathy Schmidt could be called the grandmother of DC Vote. From the beginning, Kathy was a steadfast leader and supporter of DC Vote’s work. Together, Kathy and her husband Al were plaintiffs in the Alexander vs. Dailey lawsuit, which set the stage for the founding of DC Vote. In order to introduce DC Vote to the community, Kathy went to nearly 90 ANC and civic association meetings in 1999 and 2000 across DC. With Al as her faithful chauffeur, she secured unanimous respect and interest in the work of DC Vote.



Among numerous other efforts, Kathy worked with others to lobby the League of Women Voters to make this issue a priority and became the official liaison between DC Vote and the League. She served on the search committee that hired Ilir Zherka and later, on the Board of Directors. Kathy credits DC Vote with helping her get over her hatred of public speaking.



Andy Shallal, an Iraqi-American artist, activist and restaurant owner, infuses Washington, DC with good food, soulful art and progressive inspiration. His four highly successful restaurants combine delicious experiences with cultural exchanges. Every night of the week his restaurants host conversations and performances on democracy and social justice. In the Washington City Paper’s 2010 Readers Poll, Busboys and Poets beat out the National Mall as the “best place to take an out-of-towner.”

Andy’s Busboys & Poets restaurants are known as homes for activism and social justice in Washington, DC, including the struggle for DC democracy. Andy has hosted countless DC Vote meetings and events, created powerful murals on the DC democracy movement and strongly advocated for DC voting rights. In December 2006, he penned a Washington Post opinion piece asking, “My Vote Counts in Iraq. So Why Not in Washington?”