

Keynote Address

Barbara Arnwine Esq.



Barbara R. Arnwine, esq., Founder & President of the Transformative Justice Coalition, is internationally renowned for contributions on critical justice issues including the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1991 and the 2006 reauthorization of provisions of the Voting Rights Act. She also created the legendary Voting Rights “Map of Shame” in 2011, (Updated in 2016) which remains popular. A graduate of Scripps College and Duke University School of Law, she continues to champion civil rights and racial justice issues nationally and internationally in the areas of housing and lending, community development, employment, voting, education, and environmental justice.

Ms. Arnwine’s work also includes women’s rights, immigrant rights, judicial diversity, race and sports, criminal justice reform, racial profiling, health care disparities and LGBTQ rights. A prominent leader in the civil and human rights community, she continues to fight for the preservation of affirmative action and diversity programs.

In addition to Ms. Arnwine’s instrumental work leading to the passage of the 1991 Civil Rights Act, she has served in numerous other prestigious capacities, including international civil, human and women’s rights matters. Under her leadership, the Lawyers’ Committee continues to participate in monitoring treaty compliance and responding to reports written by the United States regarding the requirements of both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination following the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review.

Ms. Arnwine is a prominent leader of Election Protection (EP), the nation’s largest nonpartisan voter protection coalition, launched in 2004 to assist historically disenfranchised persons to exercise the fundamental right to vote. Today, the coalition consists of more than 100 organizations and thousands of attorney volunteers. The 2012 elections marked the third Presidential election in which EP played a vital role in supporting and protecting voters. The EP Hotlines, 1-866-OUR-VOTE and 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA, the centerpieces of the program, received more than 200,000 calls in the 2012 Election cycle. Additionally the EP and Lawyers’ Committee websites and social media received millions of visits in 2012. EP hosted 38 call centers across the country on Election Day with more than 5,300 trained legal volunteers and 2,300 grassroots volunteers in 22 states and more than 80 voting jurisdictions.

In early 2011, Ms. Arnwine and the Lawyers' Committee began tracking suppressive voting legislation nationwide, and created the now well known "Map of Shame," which served as a wake-up call to the American people about states' proposals or disenfranchising legislation that primarily threatened the right to vote of minorities; students; low-income, disabled and elderly persons. Ms. Arnwine was at the vanguard of speaking out about this injustice and educating the public about these efforts to undermine our democracy – when no one was paying attention, including the mainstream media.

In 2001, Ms. Arnwine represented African descendants from the Americas in helping to draft provisions of the program for action of the UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa.

In 2000, she convened the third national conference of African American Women in the Law in Washington, D.C. Some 250 participants in 15 workshops provided input into the preparation of a Report and Action Agenda for advocacy before the UN General Assembly Special Session on Women.

In 1995, Ms. Arnwine served as the national convener of the National Conference on African American Women and the Law held in Washington, D.C. and subsequently led a delegation to the UN's NGO Forum and Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Her efforts there contributed to a UN Platform for Action that provides protection for women who confront multiple forms of discrimination.

She has received numerous national, regional and local awards. In 2015, Ms. Arnwine received the prestigious "Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion" award along with Co-honoree Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

During the National Bar Association's 2014 Annual Convention, Ms. Arnwine received the Vince Monroe Townsend, Jr., Legends Award and the Women Lawyers Division's Walking the Walk: Women Lawyers Still Making It Happen Award. In 2013, she received the Feminist Majority Foundation's Fearless Trailblazer Award and during the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's (CBCF) 2013 Annual Legislative Conference, the CBCF, the women members of the CBCF and the Sojourner Truth Legacy Project awarded Ms. Arnwine with the Sojourner Truth, "Woman of Truth" Award. In May 2013, she received the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' coveted Hubert H. Humphrey Civil and Human Rights Award and in March 2013, Trice Edney Communications, LLC honored her with its inaugural Stateswoman for Justice Award.

In October 2011, she was one of five recipients of the prestigious Gruber International Justice Prize for her excellence in defending and promoting civil rights and gender equity throughout the U.S. In April 2011, the National Bar Association bestowed upon Ms. Arnwine the esteemed Gertrude E. Rush Award and in March 2011, she received the National Black Law Students Association's prestigious Sadie T. M. Alexander Award. In 2009, Ms. Arnwine received two prominent awards: the Washington D.C. Freedom's Sisters Award (sponsored by Ford Motor Company, the Smithsonian Institution and Cincinnati Museum Center which honors contemporary leaders who have fought for equality for people of color) and the Keeper of the Flame Award from the Boston Lawyers' Committee.

In 2008, Ms. Arnwine was selected as a prestigious Rockwood Institute Leadership Fellow. She is also the recipient of the National Bar Association's Equal Justice Award and the C. Francis Stradford Award in 2007, the highest honor bestowed by that organization. In 2002, she received the Charlotte E. Ray Award from the Greater Washington Area Chapter, Women Lawyers Division of the National Bar Association.

Ms. Arnwine is a featured columnist with Trice Edney News Wire and serves as a frequent conference orator. She has penned numerous articles and is regularly quoted and featured by national and local media outlets such as the American Bar Association (ABA) publications, the New York Times, the Washington Post, MSNBC and NBC Network News, Rev. Jesse Jackson's "Keep Hope Alive" radio show, Sirius Satellite Radio shows, BET, TV One, Radio One and other major national and local media, including many African American newspapers, magazines, radio stations and Web sites. She is active on social media on Twitter and Facebook.

Ms. Arnwine launched "Igniting Change with Barbara Arnwine" in March 2015 on Radio One's WOL 1450 AM. The hour-long show, which airs on Tuesdays from 12-1 p.m. EST, provides provocative and empowering information and discussion designed to ignite change and inspire action in achieving racial justice, social justice and equality.

Ms. Arnwine is board vice-chair of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and serves on the board of directors of MomsRising and Independent Sector. She is an honorary board member of Welcome.us and is also a member of the American Bar Association's Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities.

