



Erin Gruwell, author of ‘The Freedom Writers Diary’, to speak in Toledo, June 20th at Access to Justice Awards ceremony and dinner

Featuring Keynote Speaker
Erin Gruwell

The author of the critically acclaimed book, which eventually became a movie, “The Freedom Writers Diary” Erin Gruwell will be speaking in Toledo on Thursday, June 20 during the annual, “Access to Justice Awards Ceremony & Dinner.”

Via Zoom, Ms. Gruwell explained to The Toledo Journal how she went from, wanting to become a lawyer, to going into the teaching profession and ultimately authoring a book that was turned into a movie.

While in college, she was inspired to become a teacher around the time riots broke out in and around Los Angeles after the police in the beating of Rodney King were found innocent, she said.

As her teaching career progressed, she felt the need to establish a platform in which her students could express their outlook on the things that were occurring around them; thus was born “The Freedom Writers Diary.”

The book was published in 1999 and eight years later a movie was released with the same title. Topics such as problems in the educational system, racism, gangs, and underprivileged students were

addressed. And the unique thing about the topics was the fact it was addressed by the students.

“It’s reported that the book is the most stolen book in the library and I like that,” Ms. Gruwell said.

Further, she said, the book has been banned in some states. “Banning a book is a good way to get kids to read it,” she said, followed by a laugh.

In addition to giving the students a platform to voice their opinions about the different topics, most of them still work with their former teacher in advocating for justice all around the world. From the school to prison pipeline in the United States, to the Palestinian Israeli conflict, to the Balkans in eastern Europe, Ms. Gruwell and her former students advocate for justice.

As the keynote speaker on June 20, she said she wants to convey to her audience of attorneys to continue to develop empathy and work to establish a just system for all people.

“I’m really honored to speak in front of a group of people who are doing God’s work,” Ms. Gruwell said.

Reserve Your Seat Now to be Inspired by

our Keynote Speaker Erin Gruwell

Tables and tickets are selling fast for guests to hear inspiring words from our Keynote Speaker Erin Gruwell during the Access to Justice Awards Dinner and Ceremony on Thursday, June 20. Ms. Gruwell is a teacher, author, and education reform activist who has been fighting for social justice for over two decades. Ms. Gruwell first gained national attention in 1998 when she and 150 of her students appeared on an ABC special — “PrimeTime Live” — with Connie Chung. Ms. Gruwell’s students, affectionately called the Freedom Writers, came from backgrounds of poverty, gangs, and violence, and many were at risk of dropping out of school due to the school-to-prison pipeline. However, under Ms. Gruwell’s guidance, all 150 Freedom Writers graduated from high school and pursued higher education.

We are very pleased to have Ms. Gruwell share her story with our guests at this year’s Access to Justice Dinner and Ceremony. Don’t miss out on experiencing this special engagement.

Access to Justice Awards - Tickets are \$150 per person and include a sit-down meal. If you prefer to pay by check, make it payable to Access to Justice Awards and mail it with your order information to ABLE at 525 Jefferson Ave., Toledo, OH 43604.

Please RSVP by Friday, June 14, 2024

Celebrate our honorees. Your ticket or sponsorship of Access to Justice supports the quality civil legal services provided to people with limited income and resources by the joint efforts of ABLE, LAWOW, and the Toledo Bar Association Pro Bono Legal Services Program.

Additional Presentations and Awards

Keynote Address by Erin Gruwell

Teacher, author, and education reform activist known for her work teaching the Freedom Writers students.

Public Interest Law Award

The Honorable Michelle Wagner, Toledo Municipal Court

Community Advocacy Award

The Honorable Ian B. English, Lucas County Court of Common Pleas

Community Advocacy Award

Mom’s House, Christina Rodriguez

Questions? Contact Carmen Vega-Pérez at

419-930-2515 or at cvega@ablelaw.org

Thursday, June 20, 2024

6:00 PM VIP Reception

6:30 PM Public Reception

7:00 PM Dinner & Awards Ceremony

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