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Ariadna M. Godreau-Aubert Named 2022 Recipient of IAALS' Alli Gerkman Legal Visionary Award

DENVER, CO (February 7, 2023)— IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, announced today that it is awarding Ariadna M. Godreau-Aubert, founder and executive director of Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico, the third annual [Alli Gerkman Legal Visionary Award](#). The award is designed to encourage and showcase innovators, risk takers, visionaries, and emerging leaders who bring a different perspective and a reform-minded approach to the improvement of our legal system, and who are early in their legal careers.

Godreau-Aubert helms Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico (ALPR), an award-winning organization that promotes access to justice and defends fundamental rights through community legal education, advocacy, and direct services. In the wake of Hurricane Maria, ALPR trained more than 400 pro bono attorneys and law students to assist in the response, provided online tools for affected communities, and worked across 78 of Puerto Rico's municipalities to offer help with FEMA assistance and other disaster-related legal needs. ALPR also has been critical in responding to legal needs following recent earthquakes and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, ALPR launched one of the first community paralegal programs in the United States, in an effort to help with housing justice and displacement. Through all of her work, Godreau-Aubert advocates for a people-centered approach to legal services and creating legal empowerment within our communities.

"IAALS is honored to present Ariadna with this year's legal visionary award," said Brittany Kauffman, CEO of IAALS. "Her dedication and innovation has not only changed our system for the better, it has changed the lives of so many people. Ariadna's vision for a better justice system, and her efforts on the ground to turn this vision into reality, is an inspiration for us all."

"I'm thrilled to receive this award from IAALS," said Godreau-Aubert. "We must continue to look at our system through a different lens, push past the status quo, and make systemic changes that actually improve lives and access to justice for everyone."

Senior Program Officer for the Access to Justice Research Initiative at the American Bar Foundation Matthew Burnett, who nominated Godreau-Aubert, said, "Ariadna is an innovator and thought leader who considers the needs of the community first and leads her life and her work with unparalleled integrity and compassion—and her impact is incredible."

In a letter of support for Godreau-Aubert’s nomination, Nikole Nelson, executive director of Alaska Legal Services Corporation, said, “Ariadna and her team offer an approach to legal aid that seeks to fundamentally reshape the relationship between clients, underrepresented communities, and the law. Her approach is transformative and starts from the ground up. It shifts the language of what we, as legal aid practitioners, do from providing ‘legal representation’ to ‘legal accompaniment’ and in doing so challenges the very philosophy of the legal systems in which we operate. Besides seeking to transform and better her community, she also generously shares her thoughts and talents with others working in this space to improve access to justice on a larger scale.”

IAALS looks forward to partnering and collaborating with Godreau-Aubert during the coming year to elevate her important work and further our common vision of increasing access to justice for everyone. She will be presented with the award at IAALS’ Rebuilding Justice Award Dinner on April 20, 2023.

The award was created in honor of Alli Gerkman—a leader at IAALS and in national legal education and legal profession reform—who transformed the way our nation thinks about legal education and the role lawyers play in our society. A true visionary, Gerkman helped open the door to a fundamental reframing of how lawyers enter the profession of law and how the profession itself is regulated. After she passed away from cancer in 2019, IAALS created the award to honor her—and those visionaries who follow in her footsteps, like Godreau-Aubert.

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About IAALS

IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver, is a national, independent research center dedicated to facilitating continuous improvement and advancing excellence in the American legal system. Our mission is to forge innovative and practical solutions to problems within the American legal system.