



# TORCH LIGHTER **AWARDS** | 2024

**INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP**  
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY



**SEPTEMBER 25, 2024**  
ZIMMERLI ART MUSEUM  
RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK

**“ At my age, in this still hierarchical time, people often ask me if I’m ‘passing the torch.’ I explain that I’m keeping my torch, thank you very much—and I’m using it to light the torches of others.”**

**– Gloria Steinem**

# Welcome

Inspired by the powerful example set by Gloria Steinem, the Institute for Women’s Leadership at Rutgers University established the Torch Lighter Awards to make visible the values of feminist leadership and to honor those who use their position, influence, expertise, and resources to uplift others.

Torch Lighters are champions for a more just world. They mobilize communities and advance gender and racial equity. Torch Lighters value collective work, collaboration, and embody the leadership that the Institute for Women’s Leadership instills in our students. The Torch Lighter Awards serve as a call to action for all of us to elevate and empower the next generation of leaders.

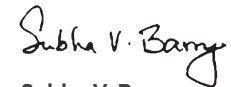
In times of darkness lighting the torches of others provides much-needed hope and inspiration. We need leaders who are advancing equity and committed to a more just world. The 2024 Torch Lighter Award honorees are shaping media, banking, film, philanthropy, public policy, education, and law. They transcend their individual achievements and envision enduring, systemic change. They cultivate communities that spark transformation.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the inaugural Torch Lighter Awards. Thank you for celebrating this year’s extraordinary honorees and for your investment in feminist leadership education.

With appreciation and gratitude,



**Rebecca Mark**  
Director,  
Institute for Women’s Leadership  
Professor, Department of Women’s,  
Gender, and Sexuality Studies,  
Rutgers University–New Brunswick



**Subha V. Barry**  
President, Seramount  
Chair, Institute for Women’s  
Leadership Advisory Board

# Program

## COCKTAIL RECEPTION

## DINNER AND AWARDS CEREMONY

### WELCOME

**Rebecca Mark**

Director, Institute for Women's Leadership,  
Professor, Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies,  
Rutgers University-New Brunswick

**Francine Conway**

Chancellor, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

### INTRODUCING THE TORCH LIGHTER AWARDS

**Subha V. Barry**

Chair, Institute for Women's Leadership Advisory Board  
President, Seramount

## PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

**Priscilla Sims Brown**

Introduced by Margaret Lanning, Executive Vice President,  
Chief Credit Risk Officer, Amalgamated Bank

**Abigail E. Disney**

Introduced by Charlotte Bunch, Rutgers Board of Governor's Distinguished  
Service Professor Emerita in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies,  
Founding Director, Center for Women's Global Leadership

**The Honorable Jeannine Frisby LaRue**

Introduced by Mary O'Dowd, Executive Director of Health Systems  
and Population Health Integration for Rutgers Biomedical and  
Health Sciences

**Pat Mitchell**

Introduced by Whitney Pennington Rodgers, Current Affairs Curator,  
TED Conferences

**Alanah Odoms**

Introduced by Ingrid Hu Dahl, Founder and President of  
Ingrid Hu Dahl, ACC; Executive Coach and Director of  
Leadership Development, Gap, Inc.

## CLOSING

**Angela Scalpello**

The Scalpello Group, Principal

## DESSERT REVEAL



## Priscilla Sims Brown

President and CEO, Amalgamated Bank

Priscilla Sims Brown serves as President and CEO of Amalgamated Bank, a full-service bank, lender, and investment manager with a century-long commitment to advancing positive social change. Amalgamated Financial Corp., the holding company for the Bank, is the first publicly traded (NASDAQ: AMAL) financial institution to be a public benefit corporation.

Brown guides Amalgamated Bank in championing social responsibility through values-based banking, customer-centric services, and mission-focused lending, serving individuals and organizations, including climate groups, foundations, labor unions, advocacy groups, political campaigns, and other socially responsible businesses, who care that their deposits are put to work for the greater good.

Brown is also dedicated to addressing environmental and social justice issues at Amalgamated Bank. More than 60 percent of the Bank's lending and select balance sheet investments are high impact through affordable housing, nonprofits, and climate solutions. Named one of the Most Powerful Women in Banking in 2023 by *American Banker*, Brown has been featured in *The New York Times*, *TIME* magazine, PBS, and CNBC Changemakers. Brown's unwavering commitment to social responsibility makes it possible for Amalgamated Bank to do well by doing good and continues to shape the future of the financial industry.



## Abigail E. Disney

Filmmaker, Philanthropist, Activist

Abigail E. Disney advocates for real changes to the way capitalism operates in today's world. As a philanthropist and activist, she has worked with organizations supporting peacebuilding, gender justice, and systemic cultural change. She is a documentary filmmaker who won an Emmy for *The Armor of Light*. Her latest film, *The American Dream and Other Fairy Tales*, which she co-directed with Kathleen Hughes, made its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival. The film screened in select theaters and is available on-demand. In Season 4 of the podcast *All Ears*, Abigail used the film as a jumping-off point to ask big-thinking business leaders, union organizers, economists, and others how they would fix our broken economic system.

Disney is also Chair and co-founder of Level Forward, an ecosystem of storytellers, entrepreneurs, and social change-makers dedicated to balancing artistic vision, social impact, and stakeholder return. She also created the nonprofit Peace is Loud, which uses storytelling to advance social movements, and the Daphne Foundation, which supports organizations working for a more equitable, fair, and peaceful New York City.



## The Honorable Jeannine Frisby LaRue

Executive Vice President of Strategy and Business  
Development, Moxie Strategies

Senior Vice President, The Zita Group

Jeannine Frisby LaRue's journey is nothing short of extraordinary, weaving through the intricate corridors of policy, government, and politics. Her career includes significant chapters at Rutgers University as the Vice President of Public Affairs and in government as the Deputy Chief of Staff for former Governor Jon S. Corzine. During her decade-long tenure as Senior Vice President at Saint Barnabas Health Care System, she advised the CEO and senior management on legislative and regulatory strategies. She also served a five-year term on New Jersey's Casino Control Commission.

Her roots in advocacy run deep, starting from her days as the chief lobbyist for the New Jersey Education Association. Her enduring commitment to education and public service includes her roles as an English teacher, adjunct professor, college administrator, and Trustee for both Camden County College and Essex County College.

A trailblazer for women and children's issues, LaRue orchestrated the groundbreaking Statewide Women's Summit in 1992, an initiative adopted by the state and renamed the Governor's Conference for Women, drawing thousands of participants annually for two decades. LaRue chairs several boards, including the Garden State Equality Fund and Greater Mt. Zion Community Development Corporation. She also dedicated 12 years to elective office, serving on her local school board and town council. She is one of the founding members of the New Jersey Black Caucus Foundation Board of Directors, where she continues to serve.

She created the *LaRuelist Café* podcast during the COVID pandemic. The Café brings high-level state and federal officials to the table to discuss critical issues affecting everyday lives.

LaRue has two children, five grandchildren, and a fierce 7-pound Yorkie.



## Pat Mitchell

Co-Founder & Managing Partner of Connected Women Leaders and Project Dandelion

Co-Founder and Editorial Director of TEDWomen

Pat Mitchell is a revolutionary force in media and advocacy, breaking new ground throughout her career as a journalist, Emmy-winning producer, and pioneering executive. She has relentlessly elevated women's stories and ideas, making an indelible mark on the industry. As the co-founder of Connected Women Leaders, she leads a global coalition of leaders dedicated to collective problem-solving, and initiating a women-led climate justice campaign, Project Dandelion, to connect, elevate, and amplify women's leadership as a pivotal accelerator towards a climate safe planet for all.

Mitchell's influence extends to her transformative role as the editorial director, co-founder, curator, and host of TEDWomen, amplifying powerful, often underrepresented voices and ideas. Her unwavering commitment to social justice is reflected in her service on the boards of the Sundance Institute, The Skoll Foundation, Participant Media, Woodruff Arts Center, the Advisory Council of the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum, the International Advisory Board for Internews, and CARE's global advisory board. As a founding member of the VDAY movement, she tirelessly champions the end of violence against women and girls.

In her memoir, *Becoming a Dangerous Woman: Embracing Risk to Change the World*, Mitchell shares her bold journey as a frontline advocate for equality and social justice. She defines 'dangerous' as the audacity to speak up for the unrepresented, to stand firmly against abuse and injustice, and to show up for others. Pat Mitchell's life and work are a testament to the transformative power of purpose and passion and at 81, as engaged and active as ever, proof that activism is an antidote to aging; that we never pass the Torch of leadership but encourage others by example to hold their own, brighter and more boldly than ever.



## Alanah Odoms

Civil Rights Attorney, Executive Director, ACLU of Louisiana

Alanah Odoms is a distinguished civil rights attorney, renowned public speaker, and loving mother to her nine-year-old daughter Elan Jolie Hebert. As the first Black woman to lead the ACLU of Louisiana in its 68-year history, Odoms has expanded the organization from a modest team of two to a formidable force of twenty, addressing the state's most critical civil rights and liberties challenges since she began her tenure in 2018. She works at the forefront of defending the Constitution and the Bill of Rights by tackling systemic racial injustice and the entrenched legacies of slavery including racial gerrymandering, mass incarceration, immigrant detention, and discriminatory policing.

Under her leadership, the ACLU of Louisiana has embraced a targeted universalism approach, focusing on representing and investing in marginalized communities to ensure that constitutional rights are restored and protected from the ground up and not from the top down. Through the "Justice Lab: Putting Racist Policing on Trial" initiative, Odoms and her team collaborate with law firms and legal clinics nationwide, representing Black plaintiffs who have experienced racially motivated police misconduct. This initiative has filed sixty-seven lawsuits challenging unconstitutional policing, successfully passed legislation protecting law enforcement whistleblowers, extended the statute of limitations for civil suits against police, and catalyzed the Department of Justice to initiate a pattern or practice investigation of the Louisiana State Police. In addition, Odoms and her team spearheaded a statewide redistricting campaign, resulting in the establishment of a second Black congressional district and a second Black state Supreme Court seat, historic achievements that will shape the future of the state for centuries to come.

Odoms is a graduate of Rutgers Law School–Newark and a magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Rutgers College, Rutgers University. She is a proud graduate of the Presidential Leadership Scholars Program, the Eagleton Institute of Politics, and the IWL Leadership Scholars Certificate Program at the Institute for Women's Leadership.



# About

## THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

The Institute for Women's Leadership is a consortium at Rutgers University-New Brunswick dedicated to the study of women and gender, to advocacy on behalf of gender and racial equity, and to the promotion of women's leadership.

As a consortium, the Institute for Women's Leadership works collaboratively to advance feminist leadership in three areas: model leadership and mentoring programs; interdisciplinary research; and serving as a catalyst and incubator for innovative programs and resources on women's leadership.

Bringing together the expertise of its member units, the Institute for Women's Leadership examines and promotes women's leadership in education, research, the arts, sciences, politics and government, human rights, the workplace, and the world.

# Members

## THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONSORTIUM

### **Douglass Residential College**

Meghan Rehbein, Dean

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Debbie Walsh, Director

### **Institute for Research on Women**

Chie Ikeya, Director

### **Center for Women and Work, School of Management and Labor Relations**

Debra Lancaster, Executive Director

### **Center for Research on Ending Violence, School of Social Work**

Sarah McMahan, Director

### **Center for Women in Business, Rutgers Business School**

Lisa Kaplowitz, Executive Director

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**educate, inspire,  
and transform.**

Scan the QR code to join the  
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