Her Abilities Award – Jury members

Shanta Rau Barriga

She is the director of the disability rights division at Human Rights Watch, where she leads research and advocacy on human rights abuses against persons with disabilities worldwide, including on violence and discrimination against women and girls with disabilities. Shantha also promotes mainstreaming of disability rights within the human rights agenda, including through advocacy at the United Nations and European Union. She is a founding member of the International Network of Women with Disabilities, and serves as an Expert Advisor on the Catalyst for Inclusive Education. She was on the UNICEF Advisory Board for the 2013 State of the World’s Children report. Before joining Human Rights Watch, Shantha participated in the UN negotiations toward the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Shantha received degrees from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and the University of Michigan, and was a Fulbright Scholar to Austria.

“Her Abilities is a unique award that puts a spotlight on the achievements of women with disabilities. By showcasing the important contributions of women with disabilities in different fields, the award can contribute to changing people’s perceptions about disability and gender. It is also an excellent opportunity to empower women with disabilities and bring visibility to their work. I’m honored to be a part of this initiative.”

More Infos

María Soledad Cisternas Reyes

Special Envoy of SGNU on Disability and Accessibility, since 2017.
Degree in Law and Master in Political Science. Lawyer, Law Professor and Researcher.
National Human Rights Prize, Chile, 2014.

“I am supporting the Award because it is an initiative that gives visibility and potency to persons with disabilities.”

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Ninia LaGrande

Ninia LaGrande (aka Ninia Binias) was born in 1983. She lives and works in Hannover, Germany. Ninia produces the weekly podcast 'Die Kolumnisten' for audible.de. She regularly contributes commentaries and texts for newspapers, magazines, and online portals such as Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland, Missy Magazin, leidmedien.de and taz. She is CEO of Hannover-based award-winning agency Buero fuer Popkultur GmbH & Co. KG where she designs sustainable cultural concepts and strategies. She has won a number of awards for her work on feminism and inclusion. Ninia represents people with disabilities on the advisory council for Hannover's application for European Cultural Capital 2025.

“All over the world, women with disabilities do important, dedicated, and valuable work. It comes naturally to me to support that, and I am happy that the Her Abilities Award honours their achievements. They really deserve the limelight.”

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Ekaete Judith Umoh

Ekaete Judith Umoh is an international disability rights activist committed to inclusive development for people with disabilities; founder/Executive Director, FACIPC; first elected female President of JONAPWD: umbrella body of all disabled people’s organizations in Nigeria, first elected women with a disability to lead a mainstream women’s Network- Global fund for Women’s Grantees network; she is on the Board of African Disability Forum-ADF.

“Women and girls with disabilities all over the world suffer great invisibility and they are mostly the unsung heroines. I am particularly excited to support Her Abilities Award because it is an initiative that I believe would greatly promote visibility for women and girls with disabilities by rewarding their hardwork, while practically working towards changing the unacceptable narrative that currently describes women and girls with disabilities globally.”

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Rachel Kachaje

Rachel is a disability activist with over 25 years experience in advocating and promoting the rights of people with disabilities and more in particular women and girls with disabilities. Her Mission is to lead a life that would always positively affect other people in a positive manner and demonstrate that spiritual and material success depends on one’s own positive mental attitude. She is a former minister of Persons with Disability and Elderly Affairs in her country Malawi.

“I am really supporting the Her Abilities Award 100% plus 1 because I believe that persons with disabilities, more in particular women with disabilities, can best influence their destiny, and they need to be visible and their abilities to be showcased without any discrimination. As a woman with disability I am motivated that through HER ABILITIES AWARD society at large will be inspired by those that have excelled in their sectors despite all odds. This is a platform which will make the visibility of revolutionaries that will teach the society that when persons with disability, and more in particular women with disabilities, are given opportunity, they can achieve anything and contribute immeasurably to the growth, economically and socially like anybody else. They eventually become productive citizens in their countries.”

More Infos

Farida Gulamo

72 years old, married and grandmother of five girls and one boy. She graduated in Education Sciences at Eduardo Mondlane University of Mozambique in partnership with Pedagogical University and Stockholm, in Sweden. Farida is the first disabled woman to have a driving license in Mozambique, and the first muslim woman who was trained as teacher. She was the first President of the Paralympic Committee in Mozambique.

Farida is one of the founder of ADEMO – Associação dos Deficientes de Moçambique (Association of Disabled People of Mozambique). She contributed for the founding of the Advice Office for women, youth and parents of children with disabilities. Farida is a member of MEPT – Movimento de Educação para todos (Education Movement for All) and she has reached the highest educational level in terms of careers - she is teacher by profession and still activist in the field of disability in sports and education.

“I am honored to be part of the initiative, which represents a way of recognizing the disabled person and the people who have done much for the inclusion of disability. Therefore, as an activist in this area, I feel that I should make my contribution. This is the first time that I am participating in such kind of initiative and it will also be a unique opportunity to share experiences with others women from all over the world. In this context, this is the first global initiative that brings
together women from various corners of the world, it will contribute to show in fact who we are women with disabilities and what are they doing. Many of us have done exceptional work in our own countries and have gone unnoticed, given that the area of disability is problematic and unknown, and our rights are often violated, and this initiative will show the urgent need for the change of mentality. This joint toil for all of us is very important. What many of these women do is to ensure that children who today have some disability can have a better life and can participate in any social activity like any and all children in various areas.”

Mariam Doumbia

Mariam Doumbia takes part in the musical duo Amadou & Mariam. She became blind at age 5 as a consequence of untreated measles.

Known as “the blind couple from Mali”, they met at Mali’s Institute for the Young Blind, where they both performed at the Institute’s Eclipse Orchestra, directed by Idrissa Soumaouro, and found they shared an interest in music.

Extended info of her and her project with Amadou Bagayoko: http://montunoe_cards.com/amadouandmariam/

“I’m honored and proud to be part of the Her Abilities Award jury. It’s a great opportunity to meet other great women who have achieved extraordinary things and that can, of sure, represent and inspire others women around the globe.”

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