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**SEPTEMBER 17, 2009**

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## **Health Care Advocate Wins 2009 Morris Dees Justice Award**

*The international law firm of Skadden, Arps and The University of Alabama School of Law announced today that Gordon Bonnyman, Jr., Executive Director of the Tennessee Justice Center, has been awarded the 2009 Morris Dees Justice Award. The award will be presented in New York on November 12, 2009.*

New York, NY – Skadden, Arps and The University of Alabama School of Law announced today that Gordon Bonnyman, Jr., Executive Director of the Tennessee Justice Center in Nashville, has been awarded the 2009 Morris Dees Justice Award.

Legendary civil rights attorney Morris Dees, who is co-founder and chief trial counsel of the Southern Poverty Law Center, will present the award to Bonnyman during a reception at Skadden, Arps's offices in New York City on Thursday, November 12, 2009.

The Morris Dees Justice Award was created in 2006 by Skadden, Arps and The University of Alabama School of Law to honor Dees, an Alabama graduate, for his life-long devotion to public service. The award is given annually to a lawyer who has devoted his or her career to serving the public interest and pursuing justice, and whose work has brought about positive change in the community, state, or nation.

Bonnyman, the 2009 award recipient, has spent his entire career representing low-income clients, the elderly, prisoners, disabled persons, and the uninsured. He has been the lead counsel in more than a dozen class action lawsuits, many of which have served as models for legal services organizations throughout the United States.

After graduating from the University of Tennessee College of Law in 1972, Bonnyman began his career with the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and The Cumberslands.

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In 1996, in response to new lobbying restrictions placed on legal services organizations, he founded the Tennessee Justice Center (TJC) with fellow attorney Michele Johnson. He initially worked without a salary until additional funding could be secured.

A seasoned and successful litigator, he is also an accomplished legislative advocate and policy analyst. He lobbied for nursing home regulatory reform in Tennessee, which was adopted in 1987. Bonnyman is known as one of the top health law theoreticians and practitioners in the country.

He and the TJC have been personally attacked by state officials and other entrenched powers in Tennessee—the nursing home industry, the hospital industry, and the health insurance industry. However, Bonnyman has never wavered in his commitment to justice for Tennesseans who are poor, ill, disabled, or imprisoned.

In spite of the pressure and challenge of his work, Bonnyman never loses his sense of humor, even with adversaries. He remains witty and warm while advancing the interests of his clients. As one nominator put it, “Gordon encourages us to take ourselves much less seriously than we take our work.”

The first Morris Dees Justice Award recipient, in 2006, was U.S. District Judge William Wayne Justice, of the Eastern District of Texas. The 2007 winner was Arthur N. Read, General Counsel for Friends of Farmworkers, Inc., based in Philadelphia. Last year’s award recipient was Cheryl Little, Executive Director of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, which is located in Miami.

A sculpture commemorating the award was created by Jillian Crochet, a graduate of the University of Alabama who won the design competition in 2006.

Members of the 2009 Morris Dees Justice Award Selection Committee, who were charged with choosing this year’s recipient, are as follows:

- **Martha Davis**, *Professor, Northeastern University School of Law*
- **Bryan Fair**, *Associate Dean, The University of Alabama School of Law*
- **Jan Crawford Greenburg**, *Correspondent, ABC News*
- **Margaret Huang**, *Executive Director, Rights Working Group*
- **John S. Kiernan**, *Co-Chair, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights*
- **John Payton**, *Counsel & President, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund*
- **Susan Butler Plum**, *Director, Skadden Fellowship Foundation*
- **Kenneth C. Randall**, *Dean & Thomas E. McMillan Professor, The University of Alabama School of Law*
- **Robert C. Sheehan**, *Partner, Skadden, Arps*
- **Tirien Steinbach**, *Director, East Bay Community Law Center, Boalt Hall*
- **Tari D. Williams**, *Director, Public Interest Law, The University of Alabama School of Law*
- **Vaughn C. Williams**, *Partner, Skadden, Arps*

More information regarding the 2009 Morris Dees Justice Award is available at [www.MorrisDeesAward.com](http://www.MorrisDeesAward.com).

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