

# 2027 Haywood Burns Memorial Award

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The New York State Bar Association's Committee on Civil Rights seeks nominations for the 2027 Haywood Burns Memorial Award. The award is given to honor the late civil rights lawyer and academic, Dean W. Haywood Burns. From the age of 15, until his untimely death at age 55 while visiting South Africa, the former head of the City University of New York School of Law sought to expand the civil rights of all people. He was a builder of bridges rather than walls, actively involved in trying to extend connections

to diverse groups within the community as a whole.

Nominations will be accepted until November 13, 2026. Please e-mail a PDF of your completed nomination form and attachments to [haywoodburnsaward@nysba.org](mailto:haywoodburnsaward@nysba.org).

### Criteria for the Haywood Burns Memorial Award

The Committee will consider the nominee's efforts in one or more of the following ways:

- Furthered the struggle for justice and assisted the powerless in gaining power.
- Initiated or engaged in human and civil rights activities which have had a community-wide impact.
- Shown creativity, determination, and perseverance in achieving human and civil rights goals.
- Created opportunities that promote and advocate for civil rights, racial justice, gender equality and equal and international human rights.
- Participated in projects that identify and encourage the value of diversity, inclusion and belonging.

### Terms and Conditions

Each nominee must be an individual, not necessarily a lawyer, who has contributed to New York State in a manner that reflects Dean Burns' commitment to the struggle for justice and the qualities that made him an outstanding advocate for civil rights and the empowerment of the powerless.

Nominations are welcome from organizations and individuals. In keeping with Dean Burns' own characteristic of modesty, self-nominations are not accepted. Nominees may be contacted for additional information or interviews.



# 2027 Haywood Burns Memorial Award

## **Deadline**

November 13, 2026

## **W. Haywood Burns**

June 15, 1940 – April 2, 1996



W. Haywood Burns was a passionate advocate for civil rights, racial justice, gender equality, and equal and international human rights.

Haywood's political activism showed at age 15, when he helped integrate a swimming pool in his native Peekskill, N.Y. After graduating with honors from Harvard College and earning his law degree from Yale, Haywood served as the first law clerk to U.S. District Court Judge Constance Baker Motley. Then, while Assistant Counsel to the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, he also served as general counsel to Martin Luther King's Poor People's Campaign.

In 1969, Haywood helped found and became the first director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers. He became the first African-American president of the National Lawyers Guild. He led both organizations in championing international solidarity from Grenada to Namibia. He monitored trials in Northern Ireland and South Africa's first election and advised on drafting South Africa's Interim Constitution.

Haywood continuously battled racism in his writing and the courtroom, from proudly coordinating the Attica prisoners' defense, to protecting the rights of lawyers of color, and opposing Clarence Thomas' Supreme Court nomination.

A recognized constitutional and criminal law authority, Haywood was founding Dean of the City College Urban Legal Studies program from 1977 to 1987. He then became the first African-American Dean of a New York law school and led CUNY Law School in gaining its accreditation, ensuring the survival of its progressive commitment to public interest law. An excellent teacher, Haywood mentored thousands of students, particularly African-Americans, fostering their entry to legal practice.

In 1995, after a year as a Senior Visiting Scholar at Yale Law School, Haywood returned to CUNY as a University Professor. The recipient of numerous awards and honors, he was President of the Nation Institute, a pillar of the Center for Constitutional Rights, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and numerous other organizations.

Haywood's generosity of spirit and appetite for people were unbounded; he always reached out with true emotional concern to others. His talents, passions, and zest for life were his signature: husband; father; motorcyclist; basketball player and Knicks fan; dancer and rock 'n roll enthusiast, treating himself to a pair of blue suede shoes on his fiftieth birthday.

Haywood lost his life in a car accident, along with M. Shanara Gilbert, an associate professor at the Law School, while attending a conference in South Africa on the transition to democracy in that country.

As David Gonzalez wrote in his New York Times' column, Haywood's "career cut across racial and ethnic lines, uniting politicians and persecutors, eager young attorneys and prosecutors, and grizzled civil rights veterans, the famous and the forgotten."

## **Haywood Burns Memorial Award Past Recipients**

2026 Rachel Chazin Halperin, Esq.  
2025 Lillian M. Moy, Esq.  
2024 Remla Parthasarathy, Esq.  
2023 Hon. Betty E. Staton  
2020 Armen H. Merjian, Esq.  
2019 John R. Dunne, Esq.  
2018 Esmeralda Simmons, Esq.  
2017 Frederick K. Brewington, Esq.  
2016 Vincent Warren

2015 Glenn D. Magpantay, Esq.  
2014 Robert Gangi  
2013 Howard Glickstein, Esq.  
2012 Bryan D. Hetherington, Esq.  
2011 Cesar A. Perales, Esq.  
2010 Mary Crisalli Sansone  
2009 Dr. Parveen Chopra  
2008 Donna Lieberman  
2007 John F. Boston

2006 Hon. Cornelius Blackshear  
2005 Laurie M. Lambrix, Esq.  
2004 Leroy Wilson, Jr., Esq.  
2003 Juan A. Figueroa  
2002 Hon. Ellen M. Yacknin  
2001 Rockwell J. Chin, Esq.  
2000 Hon. Pam Badoria Jackman Brown, Esq.  
1999 Prof. Randolph M. Scott-McLaughlin

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## Deadline

November 13, 2026

## Nomination Form

**Nominee:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Nominator:** \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to the Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator, please include supporting material(s) to describe what the nominee has done to further the struggle for justice, assist the powerless in gaining power, and / or advance the civil rights of all people.

Suggested materials include your nomination letter, news clippings or press releases that detail your candidate's achievements in civil rights work; a printed program of an event the candidate organized, participated in or spoke at (with details provided in your letter); links to websites that elaborate on your nominee's achievements; and commendations from other organizations or individuals about the candidate's effort on behalf of others.

**Submit the completed nomination form and supporting material(s) electronically (a single PDF file is preferred) to:**

Committee on Civil Rights  
haywoodburnsaward@nysba.org

**Deadline: November 13, 2026**

