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Diane Portnoy

Founder and CEO

2017 Immigrant Entrepreneur Award Winners Announced

Immigrants honored for their economic, social and scientific contributions in Massachusetts

MALDEN, Mass, May 8, 2017 / Massachusetts business and community leaders came together on Thursday, May 4, 2017, to honor the contributions of immigrant entrepreneurs at The Immigrant Learning Center's 2017 Immigrant Entrepreneur Awards Dinner at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge, Mass.

The 35 outstanding nominees for these sixth annual awards came from 21 countries and started businesses in 24 cities and towns across Massachusetts that have impacted the lives of people around the world. Collectively, they have generated income and investment totaling more than \$800 million.

The event was a powerful reminder of the contributions immigrants make to our society. The Immigrant Learning Center's Founder and CEO Diane Portnoy made this point by saying, "Through this event tonight, our presentations at conferences across the country and our national, free webinars that have reached thousands, we are replacing ignorance and fear with truth and hope.... To the immigrants in the audience, I say you are the reason our work is so important. You are the reason why we need to continue to welcome newcomers to this country."

Massachusetts Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Jay Ash echoed this message by saying to the attendees, "When it comes to immigrant entrepreneurs, how can we not say anything but thank you.... On behalf of the governor, on behalf of the lieutenant governor, please know that we will continue to stand with you, stand by you, stand for you."

Jeff Bussgang, general partner at Flybridge Capital and co-chair of the Global Entrepreneur in Residence program, spoke to attendees about his passion for supporting immigrant entrepreneurs from both a social justice and economic development perspective. He talked about the challenges of being an entrepreneur and the challenges of being an immigrant concluding, "Being an immigrant entrepreneur is about as hard as it gets.... It's hard to be an entrepreneur, it's hard to be an immigrant, and it's hard to fight for social justice and inequality in a democracy, but that's the battle we all have to engage in."

Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year, Business Growth: Jose de la Rosa, founder of Guardian Healthcare in Jamaica Plain. Country of origin: Dominican Republic

Jose de la Rosa came to Boston in 1989 and worked his way through school, earning a degree in finance despite knowing very little English. His wife, Zoraida de la Rosa, was a nurse who noticed a gap in services offered in home health care. To address this, de la Rosa and his wife founded Guardian Healthcare in 2008 with just three employees. In the last three years, employment has more than doubled to nearly 300 full-time-equivalent employees.

The company expanded from its original office in Jamaica Plain to additional offices in Springfield, Lawrence and Brockton and added a new division, Family Caregivers, to help family members care for disabled individuals and the elderly at home.

With more than 80,000 home visits to date, Guardian has provided much-needed linguistically- and culturally-competent care to elderly and disabled adults throughout the commonwealth of Massachusetts. De la Rosa often gets invited to speak about health concerns at community events and has been selected by the Association of Latino Professionals for America to receive its Excellence in Service to the Community Award.

In accepting the award, De la Rosa gave credit to his staff and to this country for giving him the opportunity to succeed saying, “I work hard and if you work hard in this country you will find success.... I came here to work, and I came here to work really hard and I’m not willing to let fear or intimidation become part of what I do on a daily basis or take over my family or take over my staff or take over my patients because this is not White America, this is not Black America, this is not Latino America, this is the United States of America.”

Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year, Neighborhood Business: Josefina Luna, co-founder of CEROCoop in Dorchester. Country of origin: Dominican Republic

Josefina Luna is a founder and worker-owner of CERO Cooperative, which provides commercial food waste composting solutions to supermarkets, healthcare facilities, hotels and restaurants. Luna created this unique startup with working-class African-American and Latino entrepreneurs from Roxbury and Dorchester, who shared an interest in creating green jobs, environmental sustainability and worker-owners in their communities. This ground-breaking initiative not only created “green jobs” and made entrepreneurs out of residents of working-class neighborhoods, it was only the second business in Massachusetts to raise funds through a direct public offering, making it truly a success by, of and for the people.

To date, CERO has diverted more than three million pounds of organic materials from incinerators and landfills, currently diverting four tons each week. This year it provided more than 200 cubic yards of compost-rich soil to Boston-area urban farms. Through her leadership, Luna is showing local businesses how to be more sustainable and local residents how to make the leap from worker to owner. She also represents CERO within the international cooperative movement.

In accepting the award, Luna spoke about CERO being an outgrowth of the work she’s done in this country for the past 25 years to support working class people. She vowed, “We will keep working to bring social, economic development and better environment for future generations, and we are not going to stop. We’re going to keep working for justice, and we’re going to keep working because all human beings deserve to have a decent job and have a decent life. Everybody have the right to have it, and we’re going to keeping working for that.... The trash is not trash anymore.”

Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year, High-Tech Business: Sandro Catanzaro, founder of DataXu in Boston. Country of origin: Peru

Sandro Catanzaro is the co-founder and chief innovation officer of DataXu, a programmatic marketing platform used by the world’s top brands and agencies such as Ford, Lexus and Sony. DataXu employs more than 350 people in 11 countries, with half of those in DataXu’s Boston headquarters. DataXu’s technology is the commercial application of software Catanzaro helped create for NASA to decide how to transport humans to Mars and return them safely back to Earth.

Before coming to the U.S. for graduate school, Catanzaro was a serial entrepreneur in his native Peru. He created businesses as diverse as industrial machinery, teabag packaging and a pub. Today, he is active in mentoring local entrepreneurs and data scientists and serves as a judge for the MIT100K Entrepreneurship Competition, which brings together budding MIT entrepreneurs in a series of company-launching contests. Catanzaro also supports the Costa Rica-based INCAE Business School by mentoring entrepreneurs from Central and South America.

In accepting the award, Catanzaro said, “I would like to share this award with all entrepreneurs in this country, those who became one by working at a new company and those who became one by the act of immigrating. I personally believe that moving your life from one country to another requires the same resolution and optimism that is necessary to start a company. As such, every immigrant is an entrepreneur.... I believe there is intrinsic value in the creation of something out of nothing. From a napkin and a dream, and several gallons of coffee, many of you here in this room have created great organizations and provided to the needs of society.... And I would like us all to raise a glass to optimism, to grit, to great ideas and to one another because those are the ingredients we need for our next startup to be successful, and for the larger startup of all, the great experiment of U.S., to be successful.”

Immigrant Entrepreneur of the Year, Life Science Business: Johannes Fruehauf, founder of BioLabs and LabCentral in Cambridge. Country of origin: Germany

Dr. Johannes Fruehauf is founder, president and CEO of BioLabs Cambridge and the BioLabs network. BioLabs builds and operates premium co-working laboratory facilities around the country for science-based startups.

He is also co-founder and president of a not-for-profit subsidiary, LabCentral. As part of the BioLabs network, LabCentral reduces the capital needs for startup biotech companies by a factor of 10 to 20 times, allowing them to focus precious resources on advancing their science and building their companies.

Since opening in 2013, LabCentral has been home to more than 60 companies that raised more than \$1 billion in funding and created more than 700 jobs, and 73 percent of them were founded or co-founded by immigrants. If LabCentral were a state, it would come in third in 2016 behind Massachusetts and California in terms of Series A funding for U.S.-based biotech startups.

Dr. Fruehauf is also a co-founder and general partner at BioInnovation Capital, a seed- and early-stage venture fund investing in biotech and life-sciences opportunities, and he is a member of the New England Venture Capital Association board of directors.

In accepting the award, Fruehauf referred to conflicting public narratives about immigrants and asked, “So whose jobs are they stealing? The innovation and ingenuity of those [LabCentral] entrepreneurs created over 700 new direct jobs, and that typically translates into five to six times more indirect jobs. It is important to check and change the narrative, and that’s what we are doing here tonight.... As immigrants, entrepreneurs, as successful business people, we have a special obligation to speak out against these short-sighted and often bigoted arguments when we see and hear them.”

Information about all the nominees for The ILC Immigrant Entrepreneur Awards can be found on The ILC’s website at www.ilctr.org.



PHOTO CAPTION From left: Gentle Giant Moving Company Founder, 2016 Nominee and 2017 Master of Ceremonies, Larry O'Toole; The Immigrant Learning Center Public Education Institute Director Denzil Mohammed; BioLabs and LabCentral Founder Johannes Fruehauf; DataXu Founder Sandro Catanzaro; Guardian Healthcare Founder Jose de la Rosa; The Immigrant Learning Center Founder and CEO Diane Portnoy; Mass. Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Jay Ash. Inset: CEROCoop Co-Founder Josefina Luna.

About The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc.

The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (ILC) of Malden, MA, is a not-for-profit organization that gives immigrants a voice in three ways. The English Language Program provides free, year-round English classes to immigrant and refugee adults in Greater Boston to help them become successful workers, parents and community members. The Public Education Institute informs Americans about the economic and social contributions of immigrants in our society, and the Institute for Immigration Research, a joint venture with George Mason University, conducts research on the economic contributions of immigrants.

For more information, visit the website <http://www.ilctr.org>. The ILC can also be found on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr.

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