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Port Chicago Alliance Recognizes Barbara Lee, Franklin Parker, Carlos Del Toro with Inaugural Legacy Awards

OAKLAND & BERKELEY, Calif. — The Port Chicago Alliance (PCA) announced the launch of the Port Chicago Legacy Awards this week, honoring leaders whose actions brought long-overdue justice to World War II Sailors wrongfully convicted in one of the U.S. Navy’s darkest chapters.

The inaugural awards for Outstanding Leadership were presented to:

- Barbara Lee, Mayor of Oakland and former U.S. Congresswoman, for her decades of advocacy in Congress pressing for federal legislation to exonerate the Port Chicago Sailors.
- Franklin R. Parker, former Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower & Reserve Affairs, for leading the exoneration of the Philadelphia 15—a landmark step that set the stage for Port Chicago.
- Carlos Del Toro, former Secretary of the Navy, for his historic 2024 decision to formally exonerate the Port Chicago 50, ending an 80-year injustice.

The awards were presented on July 17 in Oakland to Lee and Parker, and on July 18 in Berkeley to Del Toro. PCA Executive Director Yulie Padmore presented the awards, joined in Berkeley by Berkeley Mayor Adena Ishii, who applauded Del Toro for his “deep commitment to democratic values and moral accountability, even at personal and professional risk.”

Quotes

Former Secretary of the Navy, Carlos Del Toro:

“I always like to say that it's never too late to do the right thing. One has to have the courage to stand up for those who are defenseless, and perhaps can't speak for themselves. It's a true, true honor to do that, and I'm very, very thankful for this.”

“Please keep fighting the good fight. The struggle continues, and we have to continue to fight.”

Oakland Mayor and Former Congresswoman, Barbara Lee:

“These sailors ended up showing us what resistance means in the face of terror, so we need to make sure that they are honored each and every day.”

“I started working on this whole justice effort probably in 1998. Then Bill Clinton was president. Then George Bush came in. Then Barack Obama. What a difference an election made. Because I can remember how hard we had to fight. And finally, we had a President who got it and an Assistant Secretary (Franklin Parker) who made this part of his mission. And so I just want to thank you so much for really showing us how political action works. Sometimes it takes too long, but it works.”

“It's a tribute to all of those, the families, those people who made today happen, to George Miller, to Mark DeSaulnier. We had to form alliances and allies in the Congress. We had to work it from the appropriations front. We had to work it from the legislative front. We had to work it from the White House. We had to work it from the DOD and the Department of the Navy. We had to work it on all different fronts. So it did take a village. But it started with all of you.”

Former Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Franklin R. Parker:

“[The Port Chicago Sailors] not only gave the greatest measure of themselves for others, but their stories provide enduring illustrations of character and perseverance that have become synonymous with the American spirit. For all these reasons, these Sailors have clearly established that they not only represent America, but they are America.”

“As I think of the legacy of our Sailors from Port Chicago and the USS Philadelphia, I think of the power of service, as exemplified by those who fought so hard and endured so much, simply to have the opportunity to serve.”

About the Port Chicago Alliance

The Port Chicago Alliance (PCA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to honoring the Port Chicago Sailors, advancing equity and justice, and educating the public about the Port Chicago incident and its legacy. Learn more at www.PortChicagoAlliance.org.

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