



**Award winning Canadian recording artist Deborah Cox to receive Luminary Award
at 10th annual University of the West Indies Toronto Benefit Gala
Saturday, April 6, 2019
The Ritz-Carlton, Toronto**

For Immediate Release

November 26, 2018

For Media Information

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Toronto, Ont... The University of the West Indies today announced that **Deborah Cox**, Canadian Grammy nominated, multi-platinum R&B/Pop recording artist and actress will receive the **Luminary Award** at the 10th annual UWI Toronto Benefit Gala, on Saturday, April 6, 2019 at The Ritz-Carlton, Toronto.

The **Luminary Award** is given to people of Caribbean Heritage who are outstanding achievers on an international scale in their respective fields or people who have brought prominence to the Caribbean or to issues which affect the Region.

Deborah Cox is the fifth musical artist to receive the Luminary Award. She follows in the footsteps of: Dr. The Honourable Harry Belafonte, OJ; Dr. The Honourable Jimmy Cliff, OM; Tessanne Chin, and Mr Orville Richard Burrell AKA Shaggy, CD. Other acclaimed and notable honourees of this award include: Ambassador Susan E. Rice, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, Dr. Shirley Thompson, The Honourable Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré, The Honourable Dr. Hedy Fry, P.C., M.P., Dr. Budhendranauth Doobay, Dr. Lennox Lewis, The Honourable Zanana Akande, Mr. Malcolm Gladwell, Ms. Artis Lane, Dr. The Honourable Michael Lee-Chin, O.J., and The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, pPC CC CMM COM CD FRCPSC (HON).

Deborah Cox was born in Toronto to Guyanese parents, growing up in Flemingdon Park and Scarborough. She attended Claude Watson School for the Performing Arts at Earl Haig Secondary School and Humber College before embarking on her professional artistic career. Cox has recorded a total of six award winning and critically-acclaimed albums and received numerous awards and nominations for her work. Her double platinum single, *Nobody's Supposed to be Here*, from her second CD *One Wish*, held the record for the longest running #1 R&B single. To date, Cox has also had 12 Number One singles on Billboard's Hot Dance Play chart. An acclaimed actress, she made her Broadway debut in the Elton John - Tim Rice musical *Aida* and also starred in the musicals *Jekyll and Hyde*, *The Bodyguard* and *Josephine*. In addition to her busy artistic career, Cox is an advocate for the LGBTQ community and is affiliated with World Vision Canada in many parts of Africa. She was recognized for her advocacy work, receiving the Out Music Pillar Award, the California State Senate Award, The Civil Rights Award from the New York Senate and she was honoured by The Harvey Milk Foundation at the 2015 Diversity Honors for all of her efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the LGBTQ community. In 2016, Cox was given the Liberty Bell and Proclamation in Philadelphia. In 2008, her hometown community of Scarborough honoured her on the Scarborough Town Centre Walk of Fame.

In addition to the Luminary Award, the UWI Toronto Benefit Gala will honour four distinguished leaders and one organization in the following award categories.

The **G. Raymond Chang Award** will be presented to Lebanese-Canadian businessman and philanthropist **Dr. Mohamad Fakh**. Dr. Fakh is the CEO of Paramount Fine Foods. In 2015, he partnered with Ryerson University to assist with the settlement of Syrian refugees in Canada and in 2016, he covered the funeral costs for the victims of the Quebec mosque shooting, and for the mosque repairs. He also paid for dozens of hotel rooms for homeless people during the 2017-18 cold weather crisis in Toronto. The G. Raymond Chang Award is presented to individuals who exemplify the leadership and ideals for which, the late Gala patron, G. Raymond Chang stood.

Sandals Resorts, a Jamaican operator of all-inclusive resorts for couples in the Caribbean will be presented with the **Chancellor's Award**. This award is presented to Caribbean organizations/institutions that have achieved outstanding success, or Canadian organizations/institutions that have contributed significantly to the Caribbean (West Indies) or brought to prominence issues which affect the region.

The **Vice Chancellor's Award** is presented to individuals of Caribbean-Canadian heritage, who have attained success in their field of endeavors. The recipients of the 2019 award are:

- **Dr. Joy Spence**, a UWI alumnus and Master Blender at Appleton Estate Rum. She is the first woman to hold the position in the spirits industry.
- **Dr. Juliet Daniel**, Associate Professor in the Department of Biology, McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. She is also actively involved in the Afro-Caribbean community in Hamilton and Toronto.
- **The Honourable Justice Gregory Regis**, former regional senior judge from the Ontario Court of Justice and a distinguished visiting professor at Ryerson University.

Tickets for the 10th annual University of the West Indies are on sale now and can be purchased by contacting Toni Spooner by email at toni@uwitorontogala.com.

The UWI Toronto Gala is a signature event that honours Canadian/Caribbean individuals and organizations as well as global citizens whose body of work has impacted the Caribbean. The event is also the largest fundraiser for the UWI, in Canada.

For more information on the ninth annual University of the West Indies Toronto Benefit Gala log on to: www.uwitorontogala.org.