

# Distinguished Sister Series

Meet four sisters who were honored during  
Convention 2010 with Prestigious Fraternity Awards



## Frances E. Willard Award

### Top Lawyer, Women's Rights Advocate Receives Fraternity's Highest Honor

A partner at Horvitz & Levy LLP, Mary-Christine "M.C." Sungaila's (Kappa-Stanford) appellate practice focuses on cases raising cutting-edge toxic tort issues. She has received multiple awards and recognition for her work, including listings in the Best Lawyers of America (2010), the Top 50 Southern California Female Super Lawyers (2008-2010) and California's Top 75 women litigators by the *Los Angeles and San Francisco Daily Journals*.

M.C. has gained national prominence as a gender equality expert, as she has worked to secure important rights for women and girls throughout California, nationally and internationally. She has served as pro bono counsel of record or consulted on more than 17 women's and civil rights cases before the United States Supreme Court, the Inter-American Commission, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and the California Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal. M.C. is also the board president for Break the Cycle, a non-profit organization that engages, educates and empowers young people to build lives and communities free from domestic and dating violence.

In the speech delivered at Convention, M.C. said, "You may say: I am one person. I can do very little, especially to effect change around large-scale problems. But I am here to tell you it is possible - even necessary - for each of us as individuals to stand up for what we feel is right, just, fair and humane. Individual courage is integral to creating change."

She noted three cases in which she was involved, including that of UVA student Yeadley Love, killed earlier this year, allegedly by her boyfriend. "[The case] raised questions about legal protections for dating teens. Break the Cycle, a teen dating violence organization for whom I serve as board president, had recently released a 'report card' of protections for teens in dating relationships for each of the 50 states. We wanted to get the word out about these laws, and change some of them."

M.C. and the executive director wrote two opinion pieces about the state of domestic violence protections for young people that were picked up by media across the U.S. This led to discussions with the Virginia Attorney General's office about improving the law's reach for teens.

M.C. concluded, "You can and should strive to make a difference too. In the words of Harriet Tubman: 'You have within you the strength, the patience and the passion to reach for the stars and change the world.'"