



**May 18, 2010**

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## **Social Entrepreneurship Non-Profit Focused on Reducing “Brain Waste” Earns National Award for Exceptional Immigrant Integration Initiatives**

WASHINGTON – The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) on May 18, 2010 announced the four winners of its second annual *E Pluribus Unum* national awards for exceptional immigrant integration initiatives, honoring a national non-profit headquartered in San Francisco for its innovative work to address the unemployment and underemployment of college-educated refugees and legal immigrants.

The *E Pluribus Unum* Prizes program, established by MPI’s [National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy](#) with generous support from the [J.M. Kaplan Fund](#), seeks to encourage the adoption of effective integration practices and to inspire others to take on the important work of integrating newcomers and their children so they can become full participants in U.S. society.

[Upwardly Global](#) and the three other *E Pluribus Unum* Prize winners were honored at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. on May 18, 2010. The winners were selected from nearly 350 applications.

Upwardly Global, which has offices in San Francisco, New York and Chicago, is an entrepreneurial non-profit that provides job readiness training, career counseling, placement services and mentoring to skilled immigrants and refugees. In its ten years in operation, Upwardly Global has trained more than 2,000 jobseekers, and in the last three years alone directly placed more than 450 jobseekers in full-time, white-collar jobs with an average starting salary of more than \$40,000.

“More than 1.3 million college-educated immigrants living in the United States are unemployed or working as taxi drivers, security guards or in other unskilled jobs because they are unable to make full use of their academic and professional credentials,” said MPI Senior Vice President Michael Fix, co-director of the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. “Upwardly Global has developed an innovative, business-oriented approach to address the ‘brain waste’ problem by leveraging a strong employer network and working with immigrants themselves to make sure their education and skills translate smoothly into the U.S. world of work.”

Upwardly Global works with immigrants from more than 100 countries, providing job counseling and placement, with a 90 percent retention rate after one year of placement. The agency’s

extraordinary success owes in large part to its network of over 300 employer partners and its 800 volunteers, who mentor and do peer-to-peer counseling with Upwardly Global participants.

In 2008, Upwardly Global was asked by the Illinois government to bring its model of immigrant economic integration to Chicago. Working in partnership with the Illinois Office of New Americans, Upwardly Global is mapping licensing requirements and the process for accepting foreign educational and professional credentials for up to ten key professions, as well as identifying alternative career paths for immigrants unable or unwilling to relicense. The non-profit is doing similar work in California and New York.

“There is plenty of ‘diversity training’ in the United States, but far less successful implementation,” said Upwardly Global Executive Director Nicole Cicerani. “We work with employers, including those in the Fortune 100, to promote immigrant-inclusive hiring practices; we give them the education and training to effectively recruit, interview and integrate immigrant professionals into their workforce, as well as a committed working partner with which to do it.”

Said Margie McHugh, co-director of the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy: “Upwardly Global moves immigrants from the margins of the working poor into the white-collar workforce, helping them to realize the full value of the college or graduate degrees and professional skills that they brought with them to this country. By also working with employers, Upwardly Global opens their eyes to the talent they have been missing out on. The result is a win-win: Career opportunities for immigrants and inroads into a diverse and outstanding talent pool for American employers.”

MPI first quantified the scope of the “brain waste” problem that affects 22 percent of the 6.1 million immigrants with a bachelor’s degree or higher who are in the U.S. labor market in a report, [Uneven Progress: The Employment Pathways of Skilled Immigrants in the United States](#). The report noted the challenges facing skilled immigrants from Africa and Latin America in particular, with college-educated Africans 83 percent more likely than U.S.-born counterparts to be unemployed or underemployed, and Latin American immigrants 74 percent more likely.

Upwardly Global and the three other winners, each given a \$50,000 award, reflect the diverse actors involved in immigrant integration efforts at the state and local levels. The *E Pluribus Unum* Prizes were created to encourage the sharing of effective integration practices and raise awareness of the need for greater focus on immigrant integration issues.

The other *E Pluribus Unum* award winners are: [Latino Community Credit Union](#) (Durham, NC); New Americans Integration Initiative, a joint project of the [Illinois Department of Human Services](#) and the [Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights](#); and [Tacoma Community House](#) (Tacoma, WA). [McDonald’s Corp.](#) received an honorable mention.

More information about the winners can be found at [www.integrationawards.org](http://www.integrationawards.org).

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The Migration Policy Institute is an independent, non-partisan think tank in Washington, D.C. dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national and international levels.