



The Arc United Cerebral Palsy California Collaboration

2017 Appreciation Award

Thomas F. Coleman Award

The Arc California/UCP California Collaboration is pleased to recognize Thomas F. Coleman for a career that has had a significant impact to the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Spanning more than four decades, the civil rights advocacy of attorney Thomas F. Coleman has often included the rights of people with disabilities. He was the author of a policy report for the State of California in 1982 focusing on disability and privacy, and for the City of Los Angeles in 1988 on disability and family diversity. Tom was the primary proponent of legislation that added hate crime protections for people with disabilities to California law in 1984.

Now, fast forward to the new millennium. In 2013 Tom wrote the report for the largest national survey on abuse of people with disabilities ever conducted in the United States. His work with Dr. Nora Baladerian on disability and abuse issues expanded to include conservatorship reform after Tom started intervening to help adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who were victims of injustices perpetrated by California's conservatorship system. He fought for their right to vote, to choose their own social relationships, and to be free of abuse.

These individual interventions shifted into Tom's unyielding quest to expose and reform systemic deficiencies in California's limited conservatorship system – a quest in which Tom has devoted thousands of hours of his time pro bono. Tom successfully spearheaded reforms to regain voting rights for adults with developmental disabilities in California. For the last several years, he has pressed the U.S. Department of Justice, the California Supreme Court, the State Bar of California, the state Legislature, and the Department of Developmental Services, and others to make major reforms to limited conservatorship proceedings, especially by applying the Americans with Disabilities Act to the services of lawyers appointed to represent clients with special needs.

Tom has also become a proponent of *safe* and *legal* supported decision-making arrangements as an alternative to guardianships and conservatorships whenever this is feasible. His presentation today is evidence that when Tom tackles a complicated issue, he examines it thoroughly and leaves no stone unturned in his quest for justice. Tom, please receive this award with our gratitude for all your work in the pursuit of justice and for your advocacy to ensure that the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are not violated. Yours has truly been, and continues to be, A Career That Matters.