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Dominican Republic Ecotourism Pioneer to Deliver RWU Commencement Address

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Dominican Republic Ecotourism Pioneer to Deliver RWU Commencement Address

National Immigration Law Center director to deliver RWU Law Commencement Address



Frank R. Rainieri

April 19, 2018 | Edward Fitzpatrick

BRISTOL, R.I. – A pioneer in the ecotourism industry and a leading businessman in the Dominican Republic, Frank R. Rainieri, will deliver the commencement address when more than 1,100 students graduate from Roger Williams University on Saturday, May 19.

Rainieri, president and CEO of the Grupo Puntacana resort, and his son, Frank Elias Rainieri, a 1999 RWU graduate and current member of the RWU Board of Trustees, each will receive an honorary doctorate in humanities during the ceremony.

“I am delighted that Roger Williams University has the opportunity to honor two of our own at this year’s commencement ceremonies,” RWU President Donald J. Farish said. “RWU has an evolving relationship with the Rainieris and the resort’s ecological foundation, its program in coral reef restoration and a new, jointly created ornamental fish hatchery that promises abundant opportunities for engagement with our students in marine biology. The Rainieris have been instrumental in developing a multigenerational relationship involving RWU and prominent Dominican families, resulting in the enrollment of dozens of young Dominicans at RWU.”



Marielena Hincapié

A day earlier, on Friday, May 18, the executive director of the National Immigration Law Center, Marielena Hincapié, will deliver the RWU School of Law’s commencement address and receive an honorary degree from Rhode Island’s only law school. RWU Law also will present an honorary degree to the Honorable George E. Healy Jr., retired chief judge of the Rhode Island Workers' Compensation Court.

Rainieri's Legacy in the Dominican Republic

Frank R. Rainieri and Theodore W. Kheel, a New York attorney and labor mediator, launched the Punta Cana Club on the Dominican Republic's eastern shore in 1971, when the complex had 10 small cabins. Today, Puntacana Resort & Club has since grown to encompass more than 26 square miles and includes a variety of hotels, resorts, a full-service marina, a shopping village, golf courses and the world's first privately owned international airport. In 1997, Julio Iglesias and Oscar de la Renta joined the group as co-investors and have made Puntacana Resort & Club their home. In May, Rainieri will receive the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Caribbean Hotel & Resort Investment Summit, held in Miami, Fla.

In addition to being president and CEO of Grupo Puntacana, Rainieri is president of the Grupo Puntacana Foundation, a nonprofit that protects and preserves the natural resources of the Punta Cana region while contributing to sustainable tourism. The foundation was endowed with a 1,500-acre ecological park and reserve, and it houses a research and education facility. He also founded the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism.

He began working toward a bachelor's degree in business administration at St. Joseph's University, in Philadelphia, before completing the degree at APEC University, in Santo Domingo.



Frank Elias Rainieri

His son, Frank Elias Rainieri, is Grupo Puntacana's vice president of business – responsible for managing Punta Cana International Airport and Puntacana Resort & Club's real estate sales, plus sustainability, new business and development initiatives. He has developed several businesses independently. For example, he runs an affordable housing company, and he is on the board of Editora Bavaro S.A., which does marketing, distribution and sales of print media.

In 2017, he was instrumental in developing a partnership between RWU and the Puntacana Group Foundation to create the first marine ornamental fish hatchery in the Dominican Republic. The hope is to increase the availability of aquacultured animals in the aquarium trade – without removing resources from their natural environments – and to draw more tourists to visit the reefs, potentially spurring economic growth in the area.

He received a bachelor's degree in business management from RWU in 1999 and a master's degree in finance from Boston University in 2003.

Hincapié, Judge Healey to be Honored at RWU Law Commencement

Since 2008, Hincapié has been executive director of the National Immigration Law Center, the only national legal advocacy organization in the U.S. exclusively dedicated to defending and advancing the rights and opportunities of low-income immigrants and their families. She began her tenure at NILC in 2000 as a staff attorney, leading its labor and employment program. Before joining NILC, she worked for the Legal Aid Society of San Francisco's Employment Law Center, where she founded the Center's Immigrant Workers' Rights Project.



George E. Healy Jr.

Judge Healy retired in July 2015 after 24 years on the Rhode Island Workers' Compensation Court. Prior to being named to that court by Governor Bruce Sundlun, Judge Healy was a civil litigator and workers' compensation practitioner. He was among the inaugural class of the court's judges after its creation in 1991. He was appointed chief judge by Governor Donald Carcieri in 2004. He taught at RWU Law as an adjunct faculty member for many years.

"We are thrilled to welcome Marielena Hincapié back to Rhode Island to address the members of the Class of 2018," RWU Law Dean Michael J. Yelnosky said. "Her personal journey is a powerful manifestation of America's promise of opportunity, and she has dedicated her professional life to making sure that promise remains a reality."

RWU Law will honor Ms. Hincapié with an honorary degree, along with Judge Healy.

"Chief Judge Healy has been a great friend of the law school, and he served Rhode Island with great distinction as a judge," Yelnosky said. "He helped lead reforms that saved the workers compensation system, which provides benefits to Rhode Island workers injured on the job. Like Ms. Hincapié, he dedicated his professional life to ensuring that vulnerable members of the community receive the support they deserve."

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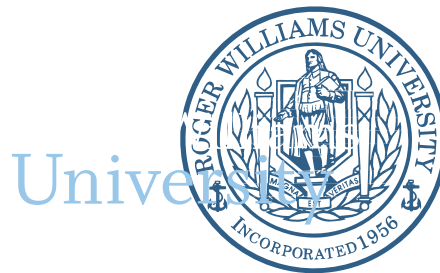
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