



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cassandra Sneed Ogden to Receive CLEO EDGE Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. Heritage Award at 2021 Virtual Awards Reception

Alexandria, VA—November 4, 2021— Cassandra Sneed Ogden, former Council on Legal Education Opportunity, Inc. (CLEO) Chief Executive Officer, will be the recipient of the **CLEO EDGE Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. Heritage Award** on Thursday, November 18, 2021. Ogden will be recognized for her lifetime achievements during the CLEO EDGE Honors virtual reception. She led the venerable, 53-year old organization from 1995 until her retirement in 2020. The Award honors a person who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in Education, Diversity, and Greater Equality in the legal profession and society. Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. received the inaugural award at CLEO's 50th Anniversary Gala in 2018; Hon. Deval L. Patrick, former Governor of Massachusetts received the award in 2019; and Stacey Y. Abrams, the political leader in 2020.

"It is only fitting that someone who has contributed so much to further diversity in legal education, and the diversity pipeline itself, is receiving this year's EDGE Heritage Award, named after an iconic legal advocate who spent the majority of his professional life making a way for others," said Leigh Allen II, CLEO, Inc. Interim Chief Executive Officer. "Cassandra always made sure to make time for persons who participated in CLEO's programs during her long and storied tenure. The countless guidance and advice she's dispensed over the years has served as the catalyst for a plethora of attorneys to start their legal careers and we are ecstatic to honor her at this year's EDGE Honors Reception!"

A native Washingtonian, Ogden enrolled at Georgetown University Law Center in the fall of 1977. After earning her Juris Doctorate degree and passing the District of Columbia and Maryland State Bar Examinations, she founded a nonprofit project, PTB Testing Techniques, to teach students how to prepare to "Pass The Bar." The opportunity to combine her passion for education, helping others, and the study of law would follow her for the rest of her professional career.

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Under her leadership, CLEO was able to thrive and grow in spite of numerous challenges and an ever-evolving legal education landscape. Ogden and her team served thousands of college and law school students each year during her 25-year tenure. From the law school admission test through the bar examination, the CLEO staff helped prepare students to realize their dreams of becoming a “Voice for the Voiceless” and “Champions for Social Justice.” Throughout her career, Ogden has been a pioneer and advocate in demonstrating leadership within the legal profession. Ogden’s commitment to the *CLEO EDGE (Education, Diversity, and Greater Equality)* allowed the organization to overcome hurdles that inhibit many nonprofits and celebrate its historic 50th Anniversary in 2018.

“I am honored and humbled by receiving this award especially in light of it being named for one of my heroes,” replied Ogden. “I am extremely proud of the inroads I made on behalf of CLEO, working with such amazing colleagues who shared CLEO’s commitment to Education, Diversity, Greater Equality, and Social Justice. Doing this Work with CLEO was a privilege.”

For more than a quarter of a century, she worked tirelessly with the legal community to build partnerships with legal education leaders, including, but not limited to: Law School Admission Council, Association of American Law Schools, AccessLex Institute, Minority Corporate Counsel Association, Association of Corporate Counsel, National Conference of Bar Examiners, American Bar Association, Leadership Council on Legal Diversity, the national bar associations of color, and more than 200 law schools to expand CLEO’s outreach. These relationships and others enabled CLEO to support law-related programs for students at various levels of matriculation.

In addition to PTB Testing Techniques, Ogden also established two other nonprofit organizations: Community Economics and Cultural Exchange, to encourage African Americans to support black business and cultural activities; and the Professional Football Players Mothers’ Association, to educate and support parents of newly drafted professional football players.

While retired, the educator/lawyer continues to research how to increase access for minority and disadvantaged students to law school and analyze data related to student bar passage, despite low law school admission test scores. She also remains active in assisting individuals and organizations in need both locally and nationally through various volunteer endeavors.

About the Council on Legal Education Opportunity, Inc. (CLEO)

CLEO, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization committed to diversifying the legal profession by expanding legal education opportunities for persons from traditionally under-represented

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racial and ethnic groups, low-income, and disadvantaged communities. Founded in 1968, when the number of lawyers of color was less than one percent, CLEO has since had more than 28,000 high school, college, prelaw, and law students participate in its programs with a large percentage subsequently joining the legal profession. CLEO alumni have excelled in every area of the legal profession to include judges, corporate attorneys, law school deans and professors, practitioners, politicians, and more. More information about CLEO and its programs can be found at <https://cleoinc.org/>. For information on the CLEO EDGE Honors Awards, visit <https://cleoinc.org/edgeawards/>.

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