



LOLY RICO

REFUGEE RIGHTS

Loly Rico is a prominent advocate for refugee women in Toronto.

After fleeing political oppression in El Salvador, Loly and her late partner founded what is now known as the FCJ Refugee Centre 31 years ago. Though she was originally trained as a physiotherapist, Loly's personal migration experience exposed her to the vulnerabilities many refugee women and children face, and the urgent need for community programs to support healing and safety.

Over the years, Loly and her partner expanded the Centre's services significantly, offering refugee women and families legal support, a primary health care clinic, and social assistance aid. Loly has focused on providing a multitude of much-needed assistance for undocumented residents of Toronto.

Given her passion and experience, Loly has appeared often in the media and served with a number of partner organizations, including as President of both the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and the Canadian Council of Refugees (CCR). She advocates for change in government policy and has played an important role in raising awareness about the vulnerabilities refugee women and children face to sex trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

Loly was also fundamental in helping create an innovative program with York University that allows students without permanent status in Canada to enroll in post-secondary education without having to pay costly foreign student fees.

Loly has been recognized and awarded by a number of institutions in the city such as the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture Trevor Bartram Award and the Community Leadership Award from the Salvadorian Canadian Association of Toronto. In 2017, she was announced as the Spirit of Barbra Schlifer Award recipient.

With the creation of the FCJ Youth Network in 2018, Loly continues to advocate for refugee women and echoes the core mission of her centre and her work, "Faced with any need... aim to include, not to exclude."



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