

Irish International Immigration Center Solas Award

December 6, 2013

Named from the Gaelic word for "Light," IIRC's Solas Awards are presented annually to individuals whose work is inspirational and who are committed to giving back to their communities.

Joyce Cummings' Remarks

Even though our four children are named Daniel, Kevin, Marilyn, and Patricia, I don't have a drop of Irish blood in me, and I barely know the words to "Danny Boy." I do, however, enthusiastically applaud the **Irish International Immigrant Center's** commitment to encouraging tolerance and social justice.

Cummings Foundation is honored to join the **Center** and many other vital local organizations in their fight against ALL types of prejudice, and the effects of hate.

Our strong **local** focus stems from a desire to **give** back in the areas where most of our funds were derived – specifically, the greater Boston communities where Cummings Properties operates 10 million square feet of commercial real estate.

We also want very much to benefit northeastern Massachusetts where most of our Cummings Properties colleagues and clients live.

For them, and for you, and for the thousands of immigrants who have not yet arrived, we want to do our part to help make greater Boston a place where every person feels welcome and valued.

Bill and I are **so** appreciative of this very special recognition, and we are very **honored** to be in the company of Jack Joyce, Raj Sharma, and John Hailer tonight.

Thank you all for your abundant goodwill, and for your vital support of our local immigrant communities. Everything **you** do every day to help them, helps so **much** to make this country the great nation it is, and will always remain.

Bill Cummings' Remarks

Good evening everyone,

Let me tell you a very personal story.

My **nine**-times great grandfather... That's right, my **nine**-times great grandfather, Isaac Cummings, **immigrated** to America, way back in 1638.

My very Irish **maternal** grandparents, however, didn't come here from Dublin until 260 years later. The year was 1898, and it was **not** a good time to be Irish in Boston.

"I AM AN AMERICAN, Billy." That was the only way Grandma **Mary Clarke Purington** would **ever** answer **any** question **whatsoever**, when I asked her about her native land... "**I am an American**," was the **only** response she would **ever** give me.

Until the day she died, 50 years ago, Grandma Mary was still genuinely and literally *afraid* to be Irish! **Why** was she afraid? Even as she lay dying in **1963**? She **truly believed, even then**, that if someone found out she was Irish... she might be pushed out of her nursing home!

Unfortunately, my grandmother, along with so many **other** struggling immigrants of her day, did not have an organization like the **Irish International Immigrant Center** to ease the transition to her new country.

This **Center** has evolved so successfully over the years... opening its doors and services to people from **every** land and nation, as they fight to make a new life, in the **tradition** of American Opportunity.

Even though Joyce really doesn't have any Irish blood, Mary Clarke Purington's story makes us both **all the more** grateful for the wonderful collective work **you all** do, to aid the thousands upon **thousands** of strangers, **from all lands**, who still arrive on these shores every year.

Thank you!