



November 7, 2019
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Steven Padla / press@artidea.org

**ACTOR AND ACTIVIST
GEORGE TAKEI
WILL RECEIVE
THE 10TH ANNUAL VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AWARD
FROM THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ARTS & IDEAS**

FEBRUARY 18, 2020

NEW HAVEN, CT—The International Festival of Arts & Ideas will present its 10th Annual Visionary Leadership Award to actor and activist **George Takei** at an Award Luncheon and Ceremony on Tuesday, February 18, 2020, at the Omni New Haven Hotel at Yale (155 Temple Street).

The Visionary Leadership Award was established in 2010 in honor of Festival Co-Founder Jean M. Handley, a champion of the arts in the New Haven community. The annual Visionary Leadership Award is presented to a leader whose trailblazing work is impacting the world. Prior Visionary Leadership Award recipients include Jill Abramson, Majora Carter, Rosanne Cash, Charlayne Hunter-Gault, Angélique Kidjo, Sheila Nevins, Claudia Rankine, Zainab Salbi, and Sheryl WuDunn.

The annual Award Luncheon, co-chaired by Kimberly Goff-Crews, the Reverend Kevin Ewing, and Kiki Kennedy, M.D., draws more than 400 attendees from across the region and raises money for the Festival's diverse roster of programming presented in June each year. Proceeds from the Award Luncheon support work that represents the values and passion of Jean Handley, including world and U.S. premieres and community-centered performances.

"We are honored to present our 2020 Visionary Leadership Award to George Takei," Festival Co-Directors **Liz Fisher** and **Tom Griggs** said. "With a career well into its sixth decade, he shows no sign of slowing down. His remarkable and varied contributions to our American popular culture are surpassed only by his passionate advocacy to improve the lives of his fellow citizens."

George Takei is a social justice activist, social media superstar, Grammy-nominated recording artist, *New York Times* bestselling author, and pioneering actor whose career has spanned six decades. He has appeared in more than 40 feature films and hundreds of television roles, most famously as Hikaru Sulu in *Star Trek*, and has used his success as a platform to fight for social justice, LGBTQ rights, and marriage equality. His advocacy is personal: During World War II, Takei spent his childhood in United States internment camps along with 120,000 other Japanese Americans. He now serves as chair of the council of governors of East West Players, a member of the Human Rights Campaign, chairman emeritus of the Japanese American National Museum's Board of Trustees, and a member of the US-Japan Bridging Foundation Board of Directors. He served on the board of the Japan-United States Friendship Commission under President Bill Clinton and, in 2004, was conferred with the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette by the Emperor of Japan for his contribution to US-Japanese relations.

Bank of America and Technolutions are the presenting sponsors of the 10th Annual Visionary Leadership Award Luncheon, which is hosted by the Omni New Haven Hotel at Yale.

Tickets for the 10th Annual Visionary Leadership Award Luncheon are \$150. Premiere tickets, which include preferred seating, a post-luncheon reception with George Takei, and recognition in the luncheon program, are \$250. Tables are available from \$1500. Reservations can be made online at artidea.org/visionary-leadership-award-luncheon or by calling (203) 498-1212.

MORE ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ARTS & IDEAS

The International Festival of Arts & Ideas is a year-round organization that culminates with an annual celebration of performing arts, lectures, and conversations each June in New Haven, Connecticut. The Festival convenes leading artists, thought leaders, and innovators from around the world for 15 days of dynamic public programs to engage, entertain, and inspire a diversity of communities. More than 85% of Festival programs are free to the public, including events that feature some of the most influential jazz, classical, dance, and theater artists of our time.

The Festival takes place in venues and open spaces in downtown New Haven, in the heart of the northeast corridor, two and a half hours south of Boston and 90 minutes north of New York City.

The Festival's programs have an impact throughout the year and include additional performances, educational opportunities, and the annual Visionary Leadership Award. The Festival was established in 1996 by Anne Calabresi, Jean M. Handley, and Roslyn Meyer. They envisioned an annual celebration in New Haven—a city steeped in a rich array of cultural and educational traditions—distinguished from other arts festivals by its fusion of the arts with events centered on sharing ideas.

The Festival is presented with major support from Yale University, The City of New Haven, The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, Connecticut Office of the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

###

Facebook: /artidea | Twitter: @artidea | Instagram: @artsideasct | artidea.org