

Suggestions for Courageous Love Award Programs

While giving a personal card or sharing a story of courageous love online is wonderful, there is no substitute for building stronger partnerships for justice in your own community.

The Courageous Love Award is for individuals or organizations that have exhibited courageous love and touched hearts. Presenting a Courageous Love Award is an opportunity to reach beyond your core social justice folks, and to engage your whole congregation or community in social justice work. It is also a chance to uplift others; strengthen and support partnerships you are already developing; and to join together with joy and with purpose those who have shared values.

When thinking about whom you might honor, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- How might you start new partnerships or strengthen existing ones?
- Is there someone you wouldn't normally honor, who is outside your group, who might be a good recipient?
- Is there someone who has inspired a local movement for love?
- Is there an organization or individual who has faced oppression, discrimination, and prejudice with grace and inspired determination?
- How might you present a Courageous Love Award in a way that will help side with love with marginalized communities?
- How can you drive resources and support to the work of the awardee in an ongoing way?
- What kind of ongoing commitment to organizing with this group are you willing to make?
- How might you make this intergenerational and involve families and your religious education program?

Here are some ideas for people or organizations you might consider honoring:

- Local legislator who has sponsored legislation such as anti-bullying bills, domestic partner benefits, voting rights for convicted felons, driver's licenses or in-state tuition for undocumented individuals, etc. Anything that lifts up communities who have faced discrimination and marginalization.
- Community leader who has vocally supported racial justice and dismantling white supremacy.
- Local public librarian or parent who has fought censorship in schools.
- Head of a local interfaith coalition, immigrant rights, or LGBTQ advocacy organization that promotes equity and justice daily.

- Members of the Gay-Straight Alliance at a local high school.
- Educator, administrator, or guidance counselor who has worked to alleviate bullying.
- Clergy member or lay leader who has exemplified taking risks and building leadership.
- Spokesperson for the local Muslim community who has faced anti-Muslim bigotry with compassion for the ignorance of others and a commitment to building community.
- Other religious communities and congregations that have been targeted with hate crimes.
- Individuals who have committed acts of civil disobedience so they could elevate the importance of a social justice issue.
- Local community center, museum, or gallery that faced criticism for showcasing a thought-provoking exhibit.
- Students who have risked deportation to stop the repeal of DACA and those who have stood in strong solidarity with them.
- Communities of color on campus or locally that have dealt with vandalism or hate speech.
- University or college president, professor, or administrator who has spoken up for the DREAM Act.
- Military chaplains or members of the military that have spoken out for greater inclusivity.
- Individuals who actively and passionately engage in registering people to vote, poll watching, and ensuring the protection of voting rights for People of Color.
- Ordinary person who has used their extraordinary power to shine the light on injustice or faced great personal risk to fight for a cause they believe in.

Here are some ideas for ways you might celebrate your Honoree throughout the year:

- Invite your Honoree to your Sunday worship service and present a Courageous Love Award at that time. Offer them a ridiculously long standing ovation, and a “Love” t-shirt to go with the award. Allow them to deliver remarks at the service.
- After your Sunday service, hold a congregational or community forum with your Honoree to highlight an important social justice issue.
- Invite individuals who have benefitted from the courageous love of your Honoree to participate in your celebration, as well as other local leaders.
- Send Valentine’s Day cards to your local mosque.
- Gather a Love Brigade together and deliver flowers and a Courageous Love Award to your desired recipient. Snap some photos and/or video footage and share them with us so we can spread the word. Share with us at love@uua.org.

- Chaperone an alternative prom where all are welcome, and take the opportunity to honor your local gay-straight alliance.
- Present the head of a local immigrant rights group with a Courageous Love Award for their advocacy, and support their work by volunteering for a day with their organization.
- Dispatch a “love brigade” to anyone in your community who has been the victim of bullying. Offer them love to counter the difficulties they have faced and help them feel welcome and embraced where they live.

Things to Remember:

- Reach out, confirm and take the lead from people most impacted, particularly if traveling outside of your own community. This may mean a complete change of plans from the assessment and assumptions you are bringing.
- Ground your event outreach and planning in a strong analysis of power and privilege, being mindful of the way it impacts your work.
- Be upfront about your ability to support the organizations work long-term.
- Be clear about the level of threat and time constraints folks most impacted are living under. Take care of yourself as needed in the process. If you are someone who does not find themselves to be targeted, be clear about what you are willing to offer at this time and in the future.
- Make sure you capture everyone’s names with a sign-up list.
- Alert the local press that you are honoring someone.