



# Civil Courage News

Journal of the Civil Courage Prize

Vol. 17, No. 2 • October 2021

For Steadfast Resistance to Evil at Great Personal Risk

The Civil Courage Prize Ceremony will take place on Friday, October 29th, 2021

The Civil Courage Prize-winner Eric Ward will be celebrated by three online events culminating in the awards ceremony on Friday, October 29th, at 12:30 pm, Eastern Time.

Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation, and Taryn Higashi, Ward's nominator, will provide congratulatory remarks. Train Foundation president, Ariadne Calvo-Platero, will present the award at a ceremony at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education, and Ward's speech will be recorded. There will also be a Q and A with Ward moderated by Train Foundation co-Chairman, George Biddle.

Ward will be featured at two additional events. On October 26th, from 4:30 to 6:00 pm, Ward will engage in a conversation with Gara LaMarche, Senior Fellow at the Colin Powell School for Civil and Global Leadership at City College. They will discuss "The Alarming Rise in White Supremacy and Nationalism: Its Roots and Remedies."

The second event will take place on Thursday, October 28th, from 6:00 to 8:00pm, Eastern Time, at The New School's Julien J. Studley Graduate Programs in International Affairs. The event will host Ward in conversation with Margaret Huang, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Opening remarks will be made by The New School's President Dwight McBride.

The events are free: go to [www.civildcourageprize.com](http://www.civildcourageprize.com), scroll down to Eric Ward's photo, click on his name and you will be directed to links to register for each individual event.

## Eric K. Ward, 2021 Civil Courage Prize-Winner, Fights For an Inclusive Democracy



Eric K. Ward

This year's winner of the Civil Courage Prize is Eric K. Ward. He is the first American to be honored with the prize.

Ward is a nationally-recognized expert on the relationship between authoritarian movements, hate violence, and the threat to inclusive democracy. Throughout his 30-year career, he has continued to combat the dangerous proliferation of hate crimes, white supremacy, extremism, and the antidemocratic activities of the far right with innovative ideas. His mission is to make democracy more inclusive by exposing and countering white nationalist hate groups, and protecting vulnerable communities.

He has worked with community groups, government and business leaders, human rights advocates, and law enforcement officials as an organizer, director, program officer, consultant, and board member to establish hundreds of anti-hate task forces. He has assisted immigrant rights advocates in addressing the growing influence of xenophobia on public policy.

He currently serves as Executive Director of Western States Center, Senior Fellow with Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Project, Race Forward, and Chair of The Proteus Fund. He is also the co-founder of Funders For Justice and serves as a board member for Revolutions Per Minute (RPM), a nonprofit agency that provides artists with strategy and support for their activism and philanthropy. He has authored several works including "Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism."

Ward grew up poor, the son of a single, working mother, in Long Beach, California, at the beginning of desegregation in public schools. He was bussed to school through middle class suburbs, where tensions were high, and throughout his youth he experienced bigotry, hate crimes, racial intimidation and the threat of violence. These early experiences deeply impacted his life and became a source of his commitment to fight hate.

He moved to Eugene, Oregon in his early twenties, and found a growing neo-Nazi and militia movement and an alarming level of bigotry-driven violence. He began his career at a time when the white nationalist movement was engaged in violent paramilitary activity, posing a threat to democracy. He began to take the lead in countering these right-wing hate groups. Death threats, harassment, and physical confrontations became a routine part of his life.

In the early 90s, Ward began his infiltration work. He would attend white nationalist meetings, typically as the only Black person, speaking out against white supremacy. Sometimes he made himself into a target. At other times, he would just go to right wing racist meetings and actually make

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## Letter From The Chairman



John Train

Alas, the fall of Afghanistan puts paid to a long and extremely costly campaign. One can't help asking if we should ever have gotten involved.

The answer is yes: Not, of course, as a Civil Courage (non-violent) effort, but as citizens, or as a U.S. national project, and

limited to expelling the Russians.

Many have forgotten the circumstances, so here is a brief recapitulation. In 1979, having prepared the ground with a subtle coup d'état, the Russians invaded the country, with extreme cruelty. The usual figures were that a million Afghans were killed outright, and five million driven into exile.

Our newspapers started to call the Afghan freedom fighters "rebels," which I found maddening.

I helped form the Afghanistan Relief Committee and in due course became chairman. We sent food and medical supplies to the freedom fighters (mujahideen) and partly to influence Congress took huge advertisements in the New York Times, Washington Post and other papers describing Russian atrocities.

You may remember an excellent movie on congressman Charles Wilson's campaign to whip up congressional enthusiasm for U.S. clandestine support.

The movie shows the shocking effect of our stinger missiles on Russian helicopters and our bazookas on Russian tanks.

Eventually the mujahideen triumphed, and the Red Army, defeated in the field for the first time in its history, retreated from Afghanistan back into Russia. The world rejoiced and Russian popular opinion was horrified, not only by the defeat but by the avalanche of body bags.

We had happy meetings with the new pro-American government, effectively led by that great hero Ahmad Shah Massoud (later assassinated by a communist team in September 2001). Public opinion here held that we should not just walk away from the situation, but stay involved. So in the civil war that followed the U.S. injected troops, going from liberating to nation-building.

There was, however, a timetable for the American military to leave, and as our troops departed, the Taliban moved in.

So what happens next?

First, we have been painfully reminded that liberators often turn into resented occupiers. Second, however, we have abandoned many of our local allies, a disgrace. Ammianus Marcellinus, the Roman historian, asked when Rome fell, replied, "When the Roman word could no longer be trusted."

### A REMINDER TO OUR READERS

Please check out our redesigned website: [www.civildcourageprize.org](http://www.civildcourageprize.org) and sign up to receive the newsletter via email. Simply click on the mailing list link and fill out the form. While you are there, check out the website's new features

## The Story of The Civil Courage Prize

Many years ago, John Train became concerned with the situation of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the great Russian hero and author, whose works helped destroy the prestige of Stalinism. After being exiled, he had moved to rural Vermont, but was living in poverty. Train was able to obtain substantial private support for him, and accompanied him to London, where Prince Philip handed him a check in a Buckingham Palace ceremony.

Train, who delivered the English-language response at the ceremony, realized that there was no word in English for the virtue that Solzhenitsyn so nobly exemplified, but that there should be, perhaps "civil courage," as distinct from valor in war. He resolved to create a prize for this virtue, and asked if Solzhenitsyn would like to receive it, or have it named after him, or be a judge. He chose the last, and acted in that role for the rest of his life. His son has followed him.

The prize, a substantial honorarium and a medal, is "for steadfast resistance to evil at great personal risk." It was first awarded, in London, to Natasa Kandic, sometimes called the Serbian Schindler. Subsequent laureates have come from most parts of the world. One, Anna Politkovskaya, reporting on atrocities in Chechnya, was assassinated in the course of the very work for which she was honored, as were several others who were recognized posthumously, notably Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Giovanni Falcone and Raoul Wallenberg.

Civil courage is essential for a good society. Some few must step forward to challenge iniquity. Our hope is that by introducing the expression "civil courage" into the English language, and by holding up for general admiration heroes of conscience who exemplify it, we can encourage the good side of human nature.

To select the prizewinner, we invite nominations from an international list of distinguished organizations and persons. Our administrative office then checks to see if the nominee truly fills our qualifications. Once the nominations have been researched, they are reviewed by the Trustees and a short list is created, which is then sent on to our Advisors for ranking. Their choices are in turn considered by the Trustees, who make the final decision.

When the laureate has come to New York to receive the medal and the stipend, we introduce him to the press and to other organizations with similar objectives here and in Washington. He will probably make contact with twenty or thirty groups and hundreds of individuals. These encounters will fortify his resolve to continue on his difficult course and will help develop useful allies. It adds prestige to a good person pursuing a difficult goal to be able to invoke such connections. We have found that winning the prize confers a measure of protection to a laureate's life at home.

The hero of conscience is usually solitary: his companions are found in history books. He battles for a cause that even his friends may not understand or believe in, or dare to espouse. The noblest causes may be those that seem hopeless at the time. Civil courage empowers us to face the world alone.

For further information and updates on current and previous prizewinners, please go to:

[www.civildcourageprize.org](http://www.civildcourageprize.org)

Twitter: @TrainFoundation

Facebook: Civil Courage Prize

## RECENT NEWS OF PAST WINNERS

> It took 14 years for 2011 Prize-winner, Mexican journalist and activist Lydia Cacho to receive justice. In



*Lydia Cacho*

2005, she was illegally arrested and tortured after she uncovered and exposed a child trafficking and exploitation network. This past February, the investigation into her arrest finally resulted in the capture of former Puebla governor Mario Marín, whom Cacho called an "accomplice of a child pornography network," as the official who ordered her detention and torture. Throughout the years, she lived with threats and had to leave Mexico at one point, but she continued her work. "In addition to giving the victims a voice, the most important thing was to be able to explain how these networks work. There were senators, deputies, governors and multimillionaire businessmen linked to the sexual exploitation of boys and girls, and...money laundering."

> In June, Reuters reported that 2015 Prize-winner Judge Yasmin Barrios and three other Guatemalan judges on "high risk" courts filed a formal complaint regarding efforts to pressure them to drop certain cases. They claimed "psychological pressure," increased surveillance and harassment by unidentified armed individuals. Barrios is no stranger to threats and attacks; she experienced them as the presiding judge in the tribunal of former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt, who was convicted of genocide in 2013. High risk courts were created by the U.N.-backed anti-corruption commission, pushing for reforms to investigate organized crime and corruption. They have been responsible for convicting several Guatemalan senior officials. Although the commission was disbanded, these courts continue to pass judgement on these high profile cases.

> On February 1st, the Myanmar military imposed an overnight crackdown to crush protests after a military coup ousted the legitimate civilian government, installed in 2015 after 50 years of military rule. Armored vehicles with soldiers and security forces swept across the country. Thirty years after he was called the "voice of his generation," 2006 Prize-winner, former student protester and leading democracy activist Min Ko Naing, who spent most of his early adulthood in prison, posted a video on Facebook after going into hiding to avoid arrest. Always a vocal critic of the "bloodthirsty" military regime for killing hundreds of peaceful protestors and civilians, he urged millions of people who joined street protests, and a civil disobedience movement that aimed to cripple the workings of government, to continue their strikes. "The most important thing is the civil disobedience movement, for civil servants not to go to work...The economy has been paralyzed as bank employees, doctors, civil servants and others have refused to labor for the State Administration Council."

## THE FIRST AMERICAN PRIZE-WINNER

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friends with people. Throughout his career, he has successfully managed to encourage some neo-Nazi leaders to renounce racism and violence.

As he attended white nationalist rallies, he was introduced to a world of tax protesters, race-baiters, antisemites, and survivalists. He said he "saw it as my duty to be courageous. Where did I find the courage? I found my courage because I knew that we who believe in freedom, we who believe in truth and reconciliation, we who believe in the abundance of an inclusive, multiracial democracy — we would win."

Since he took the helm of Western States Center in 2017, he has transformed a regional organization into a national center for effective and pragmatic responses to white nationalism, antisemitism, and structural inequality with the idea of creating a world where everyone can live, love, work, and worship free from bigotry and fear.

At one point, while working in Chicago, he saw that extremist racist movements were increasingly focused on immigrants. He exposed an insidious strategy to create divisions between African Americans and immigrants and helped transform the immigrant rights movement. Ward believes that the anti-immigrant movement is not interested in solutions to migration but in dismantling civil rights, limiting citizenship, and redefining our national identity so that white nationalism becomes its explicit ideology.

One of Ward's unique qualities is his special interest in the use of music to advance inclusive democracy. In 2020, he helped launch the Western States Center Inclusive Democracy Culture Lab, which works with musicians to create new narratives about anti-bigotry and inclusion, to discredit the myths driving our political and social divisions and invite people who don't always trust politicians and movement leaders into conversations that exist between a performer and his audience. A musician himself (singer-songwriter Bulldog Shadow), his choice of music is described as "a muscular, straightforward brand of Americana that benefits from a heavy dose of punk ethos." Punk brought him to Eugene and to Seattle, where he eventually moved into organizing and later, songwriting. He feels that "songwriting is probably the most vulnerable form of courageous conversation one can have." He sees the role of artists as helping people visualize a different future. "It's hard to ask people to go to a future that they can't visualize. That they can't comprehend," he says. "The role of artists is to help us understand what that world looks like, what it feels like. It's to prepare us."

Ward is sounding a warning: "America's dream of achieving a multiracial and inclusive democracy is in danger. Bigoted and authoritarian ideological movements are now an active threat to the very structures of our democracy established by the 1960s Civil Rights movement." Ward will continue his work to combat these movements and create an inclusive democracy.

## The Train Foundation

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## Past Honorees

2019 Gonzalo Himiob Santomé  
*Defender of persecuted Venezuelans*

2018 Vladimir Kara-Murza  
*Heroic Russian opposition leader*

2017 Pierre Claver Mbonimpa  
*Campaigner for social justice in Burundi*

2016 RBSS  
*(Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently)  
Journalists revealing ISIS atrocities from inside Syria*

Thuli Madonsela  
*(Honorable Mention)  
Anti-corruption crusader, South Africa*

2015 Claudia Paz y Paz  
*Prosecutor of human rights abuses, Guatemala*

Yassmín Barrios  
*Presiding judge in Ríos Montt genocide trial, Guatemala*

2014 Nicola Gratteri  
*Relentless prosecutor of the Italian mafia*

2013 Dr. Denis Mukwege  
*Physician and advocate for victims of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*

2012 Yu Jie  
*Author and advocate for reform in China*

2011 Triveni Acharya  
*Defender of victims of human trafficking in India*

Lydia Cacho Ribeiro  
*Champion of abused women and children in Mexico*

2010 Andrew White  
*Steadfast advocate for peace in the Middle East*

2009 Aminatou Haidar  
*Champion of the non-violent campaign for self-determination in Western Sahara*

2008 Ali Salem  
*Egyptian author and journalist; voice for peace and reason in the Middle East*

2007 Phillip Buck  
*Imprisoned in China for guiding North Korean refugees in their escape to freedom*

2006 Rafael Marques de Morais  
*Journalist who exposed the slaughter of Angolans and the plundering of national assets*

2005 Min Ko Naing  
*Long-imprisoned campaigner for democracy in Burma*

Anna Politkovskaya  
*Fearless reporter on atrocities in Chechnya, assassinated 2006*

Munir Said Thalib†  
*Exposed disappearances and corruption in Indonesia, assassinated*

2004 Emadeddin Baghi  
*Imprisoned for exposing assassinations of Iranian intellectuals*

Lovemore Madhuku  
*Lawyer persecuted for demanding constitutional reform in Zimbabwe*

Abdul al-Latif al-Mayah†  
*Iraqi political scientist and human rights advocate, assassinated*

2003 Shahnaz Bukhari  
*Battler against the burning and other abuse of Pakistani women*

2002 Vladimiro Roca Antunez  
*Champion of freedom, Cuba*

Gustavo Arcos Bergnes  
*(Honorable Mention)  
Early democracy activist, Cuba*

2001 Paul Kamara  
*Editor and journalist fighting tyranny in Sierra Leone*

2000 Natasa Kandic  
*Persecuted journalist and activist, Belgrade*

Sergei Khodorovich  
*(Honorable Mention)  
Solzhenitsyn collaborator exiled to hard labor in Siberia*

Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer†  
*Anti-Nazi martyr*

Judge Giovanni Falcone†  
*Assassinated while prosecuting the Sicilian mafia*

Rosemary Nelson†  
*Civil rights lawyer, assassinated while defending accused persons in Northern Ireland*

Neelan Tiruchelvam†  
*Lawyer and educator, killed by a suicide bomber while working for solutions to Tamil-Sri Lankan conflict*

Raoul Wallenberg†  
*Saved thousands of Jews from extermination*

† = posthumous

The Civil Courage Prize honors civil courage – steadfast resistance to evil at great personal risk – rather than military valor. The acts so recognized should have taken place deliberately, over time. Nominations for the Prize are solicited primarily from non-profit, non-governmental organizations worldwide. Further information and a nomination form may be obtained from our website: [www.civil-courageprize.org](http://www.civil-courageprize.org).

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

—Edmund Burke



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