



Civil Courage News

Journal of the Civil Courage Prize

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For Steadfast Resistance to Evil at Great Personal Risk

Videos at the Ceremony Highlight the Importance of the Laureate's Work

At this year's Civil Courage Prize ceremony, highlights included videos about the human rights work done by Gonzalo Himiob Santomé and Foro Penal in Venezuela.

Because she was not able to attend, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Samantha Power, who nominated Himiob for the prize, sent a video.

At the U.N., Power became familiar with Himiob's work; both his personal involvement in individual cases and his coordination of the efforts of Foro Penal's lawyers and volunteers who help people "subjected to politically motivated arrests." She also saw their work with families of those killed by security forces while they protested the corruption and failure of the Maduro regime.



Ambassador Samantha Power

Power commended Himiob for challenging the violent and authoritarian Maduro government and his "unwavering force for justice and accountability." One of the "most vocal advocates of the rule of law," he is the public face of Foro Penal. Despite threats and intimidation, he continues his work with political prisoners and thousands of protestors, who are "beaten, held incommunicado, and tortured." The end result is that he and his colleagues have made it "impossible for the Maduro Regime to operate with the impunity it so desires."

Her hope is that the award may give Himiob "a greater degree of protection

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The 2019 Civil Courage Prize-Winner Gonzalo Himiob Santomé Speaks of Venezuela's Struggles

On October 21, 2019, the Train Foundation awarded the Civil Courage Prize to Venezuelan lawyer, writer, musician, poet, and human rights activist Gonzalo Himiob Santomé. He, and Alfredo Romero, with whom he "shares the honor," co-founded Foro Penal, an organization that helps to free prisoners arbitrarily detained by his government, and also documents detainees, political prisoners, abuses, and assassinations.

Foundation co-chair George Biddle spoke of the history of the Prize and how in creating it, John Train was inspired by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a "sole warrior fighting for what he thinks was right."

Himiob, the 2019 "warrior," spoke eloquently about the violation of human rights and why the award is so important to him, his country, and his colleagues, "who share with me each day the sorrows and joys that [come with] fighting for human rights."

He feels the award highlights and celebrates "those of us who do not carry guns, uniforms, or badges;" who fight for "dreams" using the Rule of Law. He has learned that "there is nothing more powerful than a common person, a

normal citizen," who is willing to fight "in order to get peace, justice, and freedom back when it has been wrongfully taken away." The Prize "reminds us that anyone who truly

wishes to...can make a difference."

He noted how "the evil, violence, persecution, and death, has invaded almost each aspect of our lives," making people believe "the lines between what is correct and incorrect, what is right and wrong, are vague and even nonexistent."

"Evil in my country has shown many sides." Himiob sees it in the police, judges, and prosecutors who, "aware of the innocence of those brought before them," keep them in jail; in those who use other people's tragedy to make a profit or for political benefits; and in the inmates at hearings, who are tortured to keep silent "because silence is one of the worst, terrible weapons of evil when it becomes power."

However, he says, "seeing and knowing the evil has also allowed me to meet goodness and realize that the line between correct and incorrect, between right and wrong, is not vague or nonexistent," that evil's victories "are only temporary."

He also sees goodness in the "tired eyes of our lawyers and vol-

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Gonzalo Himiob Santomé

Prize-Winner's Work Spotlighted

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from potential retribution for his advocacy."

Power praised Himiob as a "shining example; a major and desperately needed bright spot during an exceedingly dark period; an inspiration and a reminder of what can be achieved when one person is willing to stand up to injustice in their community."

Another video highlighted the Foro Penal team for their work as "an active watchdog" for local crimes against



Kerry Kennedy and Himiob

humanity, showing how they are raising awareness about the "humanitarian crisis suffered by millions." Their database of people arbitrarily arrested for political reasons in Venezuela goes back to 2005, and they continuously report "cases of politically motivated torture and assassination." Their records have been "validated as effective and credible references" by the U.N., the European Parliament, the O.A.S., and organizations dedicated to the global defense of human rights.

The work brings great risk to Foro Penal's members. Himiob has received death threats and has been "deemed as a traitor, terrorist, and criminal" by the government. He continues because, for him, there is "no worse punishment for political prisoners than oblivion."

In the end, Foro Penal's only reward "in all cases is what they call a prisoner's 'embrace of freedom' once he is free. They ask for no more than that."

RECENT NEWS OF A PAST WINNER

Crusading journalist and human rights defender, Rafael Marques de Morais, winner of the 2006 Civil Courage Prize, has received some well-deserved recognition in his native Angola.

During the summer of 2019, he was acquitted of charges of "insulting the Angolan state" for an article he wrote and published on his anti-corruption website, *Maka Angola*, alleging that the then attorney general engaged in corruption. Marques was also charged with "offending an organ of sovereignty," namely ex-president Jose Eduardo dos Santos.

It wasn't the first time that Marques has stood trial but it was the first time he was acquitted, which is considered a milestone for Angola's freedom of the press.

This past November, Marques was among 70 "institutions and personalities" who were awarded the medal of civil merit by President João Lourenço, for their "commitment to fight against corruption."

His reaction to the award? "I am very pleased," he said, "I'm a patriot now."



Photo by Quimiliano dos Santos

Marques de Morais (l) and President Lourenço

Laureate Speaks About Civil Courage

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unteers," in the "brave mothers who do not stop giving their statements in spite of the threats they are subjected to after their children's assassination," in the support from strangers, and in "the fleeting gesture of an officer who, aware that he is being used by the evil," helps when he can, despite the risks.

Himiob spoke about how the prize "links us with other good people [and] shows to the world that freedom and justice have champions and defenders...one's fight, when it is a just cause, is everyone's fight." He acknowledged the support from his family, and friends, and from Foro Penal's lawyers and volunteers "who have never stopped believing in the values inspiring our fight."

He ended by praising his colleagues: "With perseverance, commitment, belief and heart, in each argument, in each gesture and in each action of their lives, they show us daily that when it comes to defend ourselves against the evil and darkness, each step, even if it is very small, is a good step towards the light of freedom, justice, and peace."

After his speech, Kerry Kennedy, president of RFK Human Rights, which partners with Foro Penal in Venezuela, sat down with Himiob for a discussion and question and answer session with the audience.*

Sobering Statistics from Himiob's Speech

"Since 2014, there have been more than 15,000 political detentions, over 240 people killed by repression in peaceful demonstrations, more than 6,000 extrajudicial executions, hundreds of victims of torture and, today, more than 400 political prisoners and over 9,000 people on criminal trial, on conditional release, also for political reasons."

The New School Event

On October 22nd, the Train Foundation and the New School co-sponsored a conversation with the Civil Courage Prize-winner entitled "**Venezuela in Crisis: Where Do We Go From Here?**"

Joining him was Joanna Hausmann, Venezuelan-American actress, comedian, writer, and critic of the Maduro regime. The discussion was moderated by Train Foundation trustee Louis Bickford, whose career in global human rights includes the Ford Foundation and the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights.

The discussion centered on the breakdown of democracy in Venezuela, where civilian militia "death squads" and a special police unit terrorize poor and rural areas with extra-judicial executions to inhibit resistance. Himiob described outside support from Cuba, in police training, and from China, with facial recognition technology.

A few pro-Maduro protestors interrupted the conversation for a few minutes, and then the discussion continued. All in all, it was an interesting and unique evening.

2019 Civil Courage Prize Ceremony and Reception



1. Musa Klebnikov and Andrew Gilmour
2. Ann Brownell Sloane and Jennifer Clay
3. Ariadne Calvo-Platero and Nancy Prager-Kamel
4. Marco and Cristina Grassi
5. Train Trustees, Advisors, Prize-winner, and Moderator:
(Bottom row l-r): Ariadne Calvo-Platero, Gonzalo Himiob Santomé, John Train and Kerry Kennedy; (Top row l-r): Nina Train, Ann Brownell Sloane, Louis Bickford, George Biddle, Bowdy Train and Musa Klebnikov.
6. Michael Klebnikov, Alexandra Ourusoff, George Davison
7. (l-r) John Micklethwait, Marcus Brauchli, Warren Hoge and Bill Keller
8. Sarah and Tom O'Connor
9. Wendy and Bill Luers
10. Gonzalo Himiob Santomé, Alfredo Romero, and George Biddle
11. Francie and John Train with Edward Friedman
12. Ariadne Calvo-Platero, George Biddle and Nina Train

For further information and updates on current and previous prizewinners, please go to:
www.civildCourageprize.org
 Twitter: @TrainFoundation
 Facebook: Civil Courage Prize

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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 may be obtained from our website: www.civildcourageprize.org.

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

—Edmund Burke



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