

Courage Comes In Many Forms

(NAPSA)—Recognizing that there are many expressions of heroism in everyday life, the Colin Higgins Foundation recently selected five individuals to receive the foundation's Courage Award, an award honoring those who have shown remarkable courage

in the face of adversity and intolerance based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. As reflected in their stories, each of the winners are ordinary people demonstrating extraordinary acts of courage; fighting ignorance, educating through personal tragedy and enduring political struggles.

LaJoya Johnson is a young, energetic voice of both the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer and questioning (LGBTQQ) community and students of color at Michigan State University. Raised by a Baptist pastor, she was disowned by her parents when she came out. As an advocate for equality, she organized the first candlelight vigil ever on MSU's campus and other schools across the country honoring the life of Sakia Gunn, an African-American lesbian who was a victim of a hate crime in New Jersey.

Steven Alicea is a 17-year-old gay teen from Miami, Fla. who had been displaced in 17 different foster homes before being adopted by a lesbian couple. As an activist and educator of LGBTQQ issues, he serves on the board of Pridelines Youth Services, is a youth representative of the Florida State Commissions and founder of Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in his high

school. Through his work he educates his peers, advocates for gay youth in the foster care system and speaks out for the silenced.

Sylvia Guerrero is the mother of the late Gwen Araujo, a transgendered 17-year-old youth murdered just houses away from her home in Newark, Calif. Awaiting a new trial in May, she continues to live each day honoring Gwen's life and spirit. Hoping that others can learn through her tragedy, she shares her daughter's story to educate communities about transgender issues.

Louay Ghonaym is a gay Lebanese student from Salt Lake City, Utah. After coming out to his parents, who still reside in Lebanon, they disowned him. Illegal to be gay in Lebanon, Louay fled to the U.S. to seek political asylum and is still awaiting a decision. Louay is an active member of LGBTQQ student organizations and works to educate his peers in a predominantly Mormon community about his beliefs and background.

Stephen Funk is the first conscientious objector to the war in Iraq and a gay youth. Faced with real issues of life and death, he chose to stand up and speak out about his decision not to serve. He participated in and spoke at many anti-war protests. From San Francisco, Calif., he continues to advocate for peace and LGBTQQ issues.

Honorees receive a \$5,000 grant and scholarship to attend the 17th Annual Creating Change Conference. Colin Higgins, screenwriter, director and producer of films such as *Harold and Maude* and *Nine to Five*, established the foundation in 1986 to further his humanitarian goals. To learn more, visit www.colinhiggins.org.



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