



## A Few 2022-2023 Approved Chords of Courage Candidates

There are so many people around the world who have performed incredible acts of courage and kindness through tragedy. You are welcome and encouraged to submit your own courageous song subjects for approval under STEP 1 – APPLICATION on this website. Below, we have provided a few examples of those who meet the 2022-23 Song Subject Criteria:

This Contest asks you to challenge yourself by writing a song about a courageous person or group who, through great suffering, tragedy or personal risk, performed actions resulting in significant positive change, in the last 50 years.

**Someone or group who has performed an act of courage and suffered in the process or performed an act of inspiration born of tragedy, whose actions resulted in significant, positive change BETWEEN 1970 AND TODAY**

**Susan Bro** – After her daughter was tragically killed in Charlottesville, she emerged as a powerful voice for justice, equality, fairness and social activism. Susan is the mother of Heather Heyer and co-Founder of the Heather Heyer Foundation (HHF). The foundation was launched to carry on Heather's legacy after she tragically lost her life while standing up for social justice on August 12, 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia.

**Rais Bhuiyan**. Rais Bhuiyan is an American Muslim who ten days after 9/11 was shot from point blank range by a white supremacist in Dallas, TX. His near-death experience and subsequent religious pilgrimage sparked a profound journey, including an international campaign advocating to save his attacker from death row. Ever since, Rais has kept his death bed promise to do more for others, dedicating his life to transforming hearts and opening minds through restorative justice, building bridges, storytelling and public speaking.

**Alanna Simmons** – Alana is the granddaughter of the Reverend Daniel L. Simmons Sr., one of the parishioners who gathered for Bible study at “Mother” Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC when a white Columbia area man opened fire. Rev. Simmons was one of nine murdered in cold blood on June 17, 2015, a senseless victim of the murderer's attempt to ignite a “race war.” Just days after her grandfather was slain, Alana along with family members of other Charleston victims, publicly forgave her grandfather's killer in a South Carolina courtroom. Shortly after, Alana created the social media hash tag #HateWontWin to encourage people to post a picture showing love to someone “different from them.” Instantly, the hashtag went viral and her website “Hate Won't Win” was born. Its mission is to create a more culturally cohesive society that appreciates and celebrates differences instead of allowing them to divide us. Alana says, “Although my grandfather and the other victims died at the hands of hate, they lived in love and they preached love, and their legacies will be love.”

**Eva Moses Kor and Father Patrick Desbois** – Eva Moses Kor is a survivor of the Holocaust, a forgiveness advocate, and a revered public speaker. One of the few surviving twins of the medical experiments of Nazi doctor Josef Mengele, Eva's driving message is “never give up.” A community leader, a champion of human rights, and a tireless educator, Eva is a brilliant example of the power of the human spirit. In 1995, Eva opened CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Terre Haute, IN, the only Holocaust museum in the state, to promote hope, healing, respect and responsibility. CANDLES is the only organization in the world dedicated to the memory of the twin victims and survivors of medical experimentation at Auschwitz.

Father Desbois' interest in the Holocaust started at a young age, because his grandfather, who helped raise him, was a French soldier who had been deported to the Nazi prison camp in Rava-Ruska during World War II. His grandfather did not speak much of his time in the camp, and Father Desbois remained curious about the Holocaust and its Jewish victims. Father Patrick Desbois is the Founder and President of the international organization Yahad-In Unum, which is dedicated to bringing evidence of genocides to light. Over the course of more than 15 years, Yahad-In Unum has interviewed 6,171 eyewitnesses of Nazi executions of Jews and Roma, and identified 2,546 execution sites across Eastern Europe.

**Gabriells “Gaby” Pacheco** – From the DREAM Act to DACA, she has been a courageous leader in the movement for immigration reform. Gaby is a nationally recognized immigrant rights leader. In 2005, she and other Miami Dade College students founded a Florida-based immigrant youth group advocating for tuition equity and immigrant rights. In 2010, alongside three other undocumented students, Gaby led the Trail of Dreams, a four-month walk from Miami to Washington, DC to call attention to the plight of immigrant families under the threat of deportation. In 2012, as political director for United We Dream, she spearheaded the efforts that led to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. On April 22, 2013, Pacheco became the first undocumented Latina to testify in front of Congress, speaking to the Senate Judiciary Committee about the urgent need for immigration reform. Gaby is known for her compassionate activism and work to dismantle anti-immigrant sentiments.

**Megan and Grace Phelps-Roper** – In 2012, Megan and Grace chose to leave the Westboro Baptist Church, the fundamentalist church led by their grandfather and composed primarily of family members, in which the two sisters had spent their entire lives. Westboro is notorious for staging thousands of protests condemning gays and Jews, with signs such as “God Hates Fags” and “Jews Killed Jesus,” and for picketing the funerals of military personnel killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unable to continue to follow the doctrines of their church, Megan and Grace left Westboro, knowing that their family would never see or speak to them again. For the past few years, Megan and Grace have dedicated themselves to forging relationships with the communities they once condemned.

**Ambassador Jakob Finci** – Jakob Finci’s family came to Sarajevo in the 16th century, after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. He was born in 1943, shortly after his parents were liberated from an Italian detention camp. During the Bosnian War (1992-95), he headed La Benevolencija, a Jewish communal organization that gave humanitarian aid to Muslims, Croats, and Serbs during the siege of Sarajevo by Bosnian Serb forces. His efforts helped to save more than a thousand Muslims by providing documents which enabled them to pass as Jews. He later chaired the effort to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission following the conflict.

**Jacqueline Murekatete** – Jacqueline Murekatete is a survivor of the Rwandan Genocide and a human rights activist. In 1994, at the age of nine, Jacqueline’s parents and siblings were murdered, along with hundreds of thousands of other Tutsis, by members of the Hutu majority. Adopted by an uncle in the United States, Jacqueline first told her story after hearing a Holocaust survivor, David Gewitzman, speak at her school. She is a lawyer, human rights activist and the founder of the nonprofit organization Genocide Survivors Foundation.

**Judy and Dennis Shepard** – On October 6, 1998, Judy and Dennis’ son, Matthew, a 21 year-old student at the University of Wyoming, was beaten and murdered near Laramie, Wyoming by two men because he was gay. Matthew Shepard’s murder became a catalyst for a national effort to pass federal hate crime legislation and led Judy and Dennis to dedicate their lives to preventing another parent from experiencing what they had. In 2009, after a decade of work, Judy and Dennis watched as President Obama signed into law the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Federal Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

**Amardeep Singh Kaleka** – On August 5, 2012, a white supremacist attacked the Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, killing six people, including the temple's founder, Satwant Singh Kaleka. As the tragedy unfolded, and in the days and weeks that followed, Satwant Singh Kaleka's son, Amardeep, emerged as the voice of the Sikh community of Oak Creek. His courage and eloquence in the wake of the shooting and his powerful call for understanding and respect resonated throughout the nation.

**Pat Kuttles** – In July, 1999, Pat Kuttles' son, Private First Class Barry Winchell, was beaten to death by another soldier because he was thought to be gay. Since Barry's murder, Pat Kuttles has dedicated her life to securing justice for her son, and has emerged as one of the most powerful voices in the movement to repeal the U.S. military's policy on sexual orientation, which is known simply as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." [Follow-up: The Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010 became effective September 20, 2011.]

**Wei Chen** – Wei was one of dozens of Asian students who were attacked during a day-long series of assaults by fellow students at South Philadelphia High School in 2010. Using civil disobedience and coalition building, Wei changed the climate of fear and violence at South Philly and forced the school system and the city to examine the way it looked at Asian immigrants.

**Professor Liviu Librescu** – A prominent professor at Virginia Tech, he was a Romanian–American scientist and engineer and a Holocaust survivor. On April 16, 2007, Prof. Librescu heard gun fire in the hallway outside his classroom. Ordering his students to escape by the windows, he held the door closed as the gunman fought to get in. Thirty-two people, including Liviu Librescu, were killed in the shooting rampage. Because of Prof. Librescu's actions, all of his students, except one, survived the massacre.

**Simon Deng** – Simon Deng was nine years old when he was kidnapped from his village in southern Sudan and given as a slave to an Arab family in the north. He endured three years of brutality and terror, refusing conversion from Christianity to Islam in order to save himself, before escaping. He learned to swim from a Muslim friend and became the national swimming champion of Sudan. When the Sudanese government launched a campaign to "cleanse" its cities of Christians, Simon used his position to free hundreds of people from prisons in the capital of Khartoum. Today, Simon Deng is an American citizen and dedicates his life to fighting slavery and genocide in the Sudan.