



The Path

Introduction from Soul Matters Collective

“Courage doesn’t always roar.”

- Mary Anne Radmacher

Courageous people change the world. There are so many examples of that this month. October is LGBTQ history month and reminds us of the many who bravely moved (and continue to move) our world toward greater acceptance and affirmation. The revolutionary prophet of peace, Mohandas Gandhi, was born on October 2. Our Christian friends celebrate Reformation Day and Martin Luther’s courage that changed how we all think about religious authority. We rightly honor such giants. The problem is most of us aren’t that tall.

Or are we? Here’s what we can do to help each other remember: In addition to the heroic acts that alter history, there are also the daily choices that prevent history from altering us. Battling evil and bending the arc of the universe toward justice deserves praise, but there’s also the ordinary work of integrity and not allowing yourself to be bent. This needs to be noticed as well. There’s the bravery of embracing your beauty even when it doesn’t fit the air-brushed images surrounding you. There’s the courage of calling out the micro-aggressions that happen almost every day at work. And what about resisting the persistent seduction of status and stuff? The list is long: Turning down that drink one day at a time. Making yourself get out of bed when the depression tells you to stay there. Holding your partner’s hand in public. Make no mistake, there are dozens of ordinary acts of bravery we rise up to everyday!

Or maybe we should say there are dozens of ordinary acts of bravery we help each other rise up to every day. Courage is not only noble;

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What Does It Mean to Be a People of Courage?



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it's contagious. The bravery that makes it into the history books may save the world, but our ordinary courage keeps us going. Watching someone else make it through another day helps us endure. Witnessing someone else confront bigotry allows us to bravely be more open about who we are. They say that courage is found by digging deep, but most often it is passed on.

So don't worry so much if you haven't changed the world yet. And certainly let's stop comparing ourselves with those giants. Our work rests less in looking up to them and more in looking over at and gaining strength from each other. And remembering that others are looking over at and needing strength from us.

2017/2018 Themes

- September – Welcome
- October – Courage
- November – Abundance
- December – Hope
- January – Intention
- February – Perseverance
- March – Balance
- April – Emergence
- May – Creativity
- June – Blessing

Self-Care for the Spiritual Journey

When we go deeper into spiritual exploration together and individually, there's always a chance we will encounter some tender spots in our own spirits and stories. Therefore, it is important, when doing deep spiritual work, to have trusted companions and adequate support on the journey, and to know you are welcome to care for yourself and your spirit along the way, engaging in the theme to the level that's comfortable for you.



Likewise, please know that we are here to offer support if you find yourself struggling with something surfaced by the monthly theme. During Rev. Mara's sabbatical, Rev. Phyllis O'Connell is our first point of contact for pastoral care. She may be able to set up a time to meet you, or refer you to Andre Mol, our ministerial intern, caring lay leaders through our Care Network, or outside resources. She can be reached at phyllis@uusociety.org or (802) 862-5630 ext. 24.

Option A: Step Outside Your Comfort Zone

We rarely give ordinary courage the honor it is due. On a daily basis, the threats we face are not the dramatic dangers of burning buildings but the insidious hazards of our comfort zones. This reminds us that the enemy of courage is often not fear but safety and routine. Sometimes those routines support and structure our lives; sometimes they stifle and shrink them. So this month, you are invited to pursue the practice of ordinary risk and adventure. Your instructions are simple: Pick an activity that pulls you out of your comfort zone.

Here's some inspiration and guidance:

- <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/step-out-of-the-comfort-zone.html>
- <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/how-to-move-out-of-your-comfort-zone.html>

Come to your group ready to share:

1. Why you picked this activity
2. Has your activity emboldened you or changed you?
3. Do you plan to stick with it? If so, what skills or new ways of thinking did you learn that will keep you from falling back into your rut?

Option B: Finally Say “No.”

Courage is often about bravely saying “yes,” but sometimes saying “no” is what is needed. Opening ourselves to new experiences enriches us, but putting our foot down and setting boundaries often saves us. So this month, you are invited to identify and lean into a brave “No!”

Here's an article to help you on your way: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/201311/the-power-no>.

Do you have an experience of having said “no” that you felt was an affirmation of personal responsibility?

Option C: Prop Up The Courage of Others

We all have people in our lives who inspire us with their courage. But have we ever told them? We know how important it is to have our courage noticed, so let's be sure to offer that gift to others. Write a letter, give a symbolic gift or treat them to lunch or coffee--whatever it is, find a way to tell someone that their courage is seen and matters. It's said that courage is contagious. But how would they ever know they inspired us, unless we tell them?

Spiritual Exercises

Option D: The Courage of An Ally

As a faith movement, we are waking up to the need for radical action around racial justice and healing. For white UUs, that work involves a deeper and more developed understanding of allyship. It is possibly the most courageous work to which we are called today. So this month, you are invited to begin or lean more intentionally into that work. Here is one way to turn that work into a spiritual practice this month:

1. Listen and learn: Make time this month to go through the list of videos and essays below.
2. Identify Your Resistance: Notice where you find yourself pushing back while watching and reading the videos and essays. Try to avoid defensiveness. Also be sure to offer yourself compassion.
3. Identify and Commit to *Your* Work: Maybe it's more learning. Perhaps it involves finding the courage to confront racism from a family member or co-worker. You might even be ready to invite someone into a courageous conversation. Take your time to figure it out. If you listen deeply to the videos and articles, your work will surely and clearly emerge.

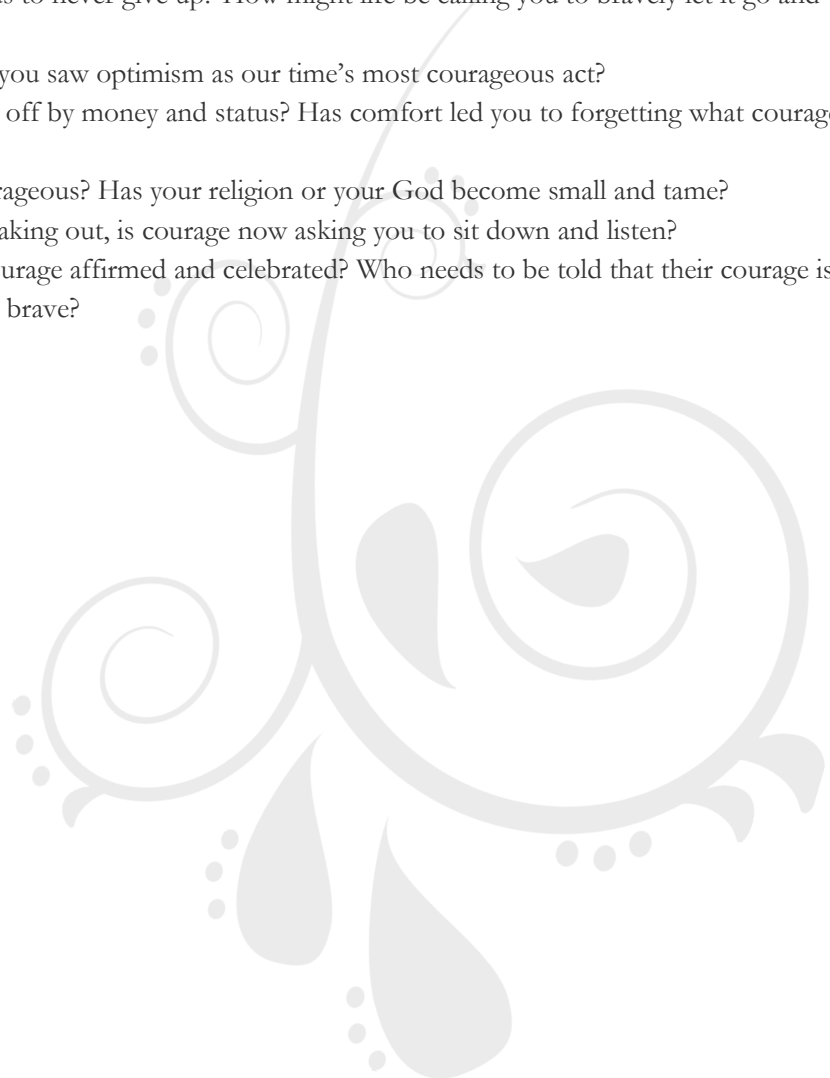
Resources For Courageous Allyship:

- Tips For White Allies: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2c5xelPE8fc>
- How To Be A White Ally - DON'T: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7sOPngK1DSc>
- White Allies: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SX4r7XZFJU0>
- Five Strategies for Courageous Conversations About Racism with friends, family & co-workers: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6Wq7mc5PAg&index=37&list=PL8PINNxdxiI6gcm6fxPDG9Yt_lMrMrluf
- Eleven Ways White America Avoids Taking Responsibility for Its Racism: <http://www.hopkinsmn.com/police/equity/pdf/11-ways-avoid-taking-responsibility.pdf>
- Increase Your Racial Stamina: Take The Pledge: <https://notesfromanaspiringhumanitarian.com/white-people-increase-your-racial-stamina-take-the-pledge/>
- We Need Co-conspirators, Not Allies: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/26/how-white-americans-can-fight-racism>
- White People in Solidarity Against Racism: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KahoDIihsKI>
- What Are White People To Do? - A Forum on Racism and Being Part of the Solution - UU Tulsa: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acx-PVNPDO0>

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the single question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of courage means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?

What's your question? Your question may not be listed below. As always, if the following questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

1. Is it time to tell someone how scared you really are?
2. Is it time to bravely admit, "I was wrong"?
3. Is safely tiptoeing around "it" making you ill?
4. Are you saying "yes" when you need to courageously say "no"?
5. Have you mistakenly convinced yourself that courage can come without sacrifice?
6. Who says it's always courageous to never give up? How might life be calling you to bravely let it go and walk away?
7. How might your life change if you saw optimism as our time's most courageous act?
8. Has your courage been bought off by money and status? Has comfort led you to forgetting what courage feels like?
9. Does your faith make you courageous? Has your religion or your God become small and tame?
10. Instead of standing up and speaking out, is courage now asking you to sit down and listen?
11. Who in your life needs their courage affirmed and celebrated? Who needs to be told that their courage is contagious and helping you be more brave?



The below recommended resources are not “required reading.” We will not analyze these pieces at our small group meeting. Instead they are here to companion you on your personal journey this month, get your thinking started, and open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be part of a people of COURAGE.

Word Roots

From Latin *cor* (heart): denoting the heart, as the seat of feelings.

Wise Words

“Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Do not be afraid.”

- Frederick Buechner

“All around you, people will be tiptoeing through life, just to arrive at death safely. But dear children, do not tiptoe. Run, hop, skip, or dance, just don't tiptoe.”

- Shane Claiborne

“Safety is not the thing you should look for. Joy is what you should look for. Security and joy may not come in the same package. They can, but they also cannot. There is no guarantee.”

- Neale Donald Walsh

“What the world desperately needs is more dangerous disciples of an unsafe God. You can only be safe if you've fashioned for yourself a God small and tame...because grace is a dangerous thing...and real love is never safe. There are Pharisees — and I've been one — who are alive and well and who feel far safer with a dead God, one they seal up in a coffin of mere theory, one they bury under the sod of human rationality and tidiness...Maybe faith isn't as much formula as the mystery of being drawn to, surrendering to, the overwhelming love and will of the most dangerous Reality in all the universe?...Those who have [God's dangerous love] in their bones aren't ever safe. Open flames are always dangerous.”

- Ann Voskamp

“It's a shallow life that doesn't give a person a few scars.”

- Garrison Keillor

“It simply isn't an adventure worth telling if there aren't dragons in it.”

- J.R.R. Tolkien

“To get something you never had, you have to do something you never did.”

- Unknown

“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgement that something else is more important than fear.”

- Ambrose Redmoon

“Don't be afraid of your fears. They're not there to scare you. They're there to let you know that something is worth it.”

- C. JoyBell

“Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage. Perhaps everything that frightens us is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that wants our love.”

- Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*

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“Our word ‘courage’ comes from the French word coeur, ‘heart.’ Courage is a willingness to act from the heart, to let your heart lead the way, not knowing what will be required of you next, and if you can do it.”

- Jean Shinoda Bolen

“Courage is when you know you're licked before you begin, but you begin anyway and see it through no matter what.”

- Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

“Softness is not weakness. It takes courage to stay delicate in a world so cruel.”

- Beau Taplin

“Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, ‘I will try again tomorrow.’”

- Mary Anne Radmacher

“Sometimes standing against evil is more important than defeating it. The greatest heroes stand because it is right to do so, not because they believe they will walk away with their lives. Such selfless courage is a victory in itself.”

- N.D. Wilson

“The reward for conformity was that everyone liked you except yourself.”

- Rita Mae Brown

“Courage is acting out of self respect for doing the right thing. To not act, or to do something different other than the right thing, is soul murder. Not being true to oneself and others leaves one diminished and in some ways less than human.”

- Harry Holleywood

“Fear” by Shel Silverstein:

Barnabus Browning

Was scared of drowning,

So he never would swim

Or get into a boat

Or take a bath

Or cross a moat.

He just sat day and night

With his door locked tight

And the windows nailed down,

Shaking with fear

That a wave might appear,

And cried so many tears

That they filled up the room

And he drowned.

“A hero is no braver than an ordinary person, but they are braver five minutes longer.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Courage is the price that life exacts for granting peace.”

- Amelia Earhart

“If we must both be right, we will lose each other.”

- Nayyirah Waheed



Songs and Music

“Quiet” by MILCK with GW Sirens and Capital

Blend: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9lond4SXgk>

Choreographed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmOj5YGs5NY>

“I can’t keep quiet...” A repeat of their performance at the Women's March.

“Little Boxes” by Malvina Reynolds:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_2IGkEU4Xs&index=24&list=RDF5fKaa7cXuM

The courage to rise above the lure of little boxes and ticky tacky.

“Brave” by Sara Bareilles, cover by Amy Hoffman: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDFVXZi96oA>

“Take Me to Church”

Cover by Neon Jungle: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ya46q6ALt9Q>

Cover by Kiesza: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwxIFk3tZSI>

Original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juTxyGbb5T0>

The Courageous Call of Black Lives Matter

“Hands Up” by Daye Jack: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeFM_PU7fcA

“Living with my head down, hands up/No, no, don't shoot”

“Black Rage” by Lauryn Hill: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_sdubWaY5o

“Black rage is founded on two thirds a person/Rapings and beatings and suffering that worsens/Black human packages tied up in strings/Black rage can come from all these kinds of things.”

“Cry No More” by Rhiannon Giddens: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PU3cGLtULeI>

“First they stole our body, then they stole our sons/Then they stole our gods and gave us new ones/Then they stole our beauty, comfort in our skin/And then they gave us duty and then they gave us sin... The legacy is mighty. We can’t carry this alone. You have to help us fight it. And together we’ll be home.”

“Chains” by Usher: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Knd2el4Lfw>

The courage to not look away...

Videos

The Courage to be Human: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPGREQvK-dQ&list=RDaqsL0QQaSP4&index=10>

All The Way - A Charles Bukowski Poem: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6_QUhUPrF4

What's Your Greatest Fear? | Ages 0-100: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCvfFj1IYj0>

The Fear of Getting Close: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylMnFrXxEGo>

Getting close to another human isn’t the trouble free process we might imagine. It’s worth understanding just how frightening closeness can be.

The Courage to Come Out...and Love

Steven Boyle reading his poem, “I Hit Send, or Modern Meltdown”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxKUnT3Lq28>

Five Strategies for Courageous Conversations about Racism:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6Wq7mc5PAg&index=37&list=PL8PINNxdxiI6gcm6fxPDG9Yt_1MrMrluf

Moral Courage and Courageous Conversations:

“Confederate pride, white supremacy, and my state flag” - Moral Courage TV:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4QZrui7Ip8>

For Bullying Prevention Month

For the courage of the bullied and beautiful - Shane Koyczan:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sa1iS1MqUy4&spfreload=10>

to dance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEV0rY878oQ>

Why I Bully: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mmIu5IZmvE>

Podcasts

Fearless - *Invisibilia* Podcast: <http://www.npr.org/programs/invisibilia/377515477/fearless?showDate=2015-01-16>

What would happen if you could disappear fear? We'll hear about the striking (and rare) case of a woman with no fear. The second half of the show explores how the rest of us might “turn off” fear.

The Courage to Stop Hiding Your Pain & Vulnerability - *TED Talk*:

https://www.ted.com/talks/ash_beacham_we_re_all_hiding_something_let_s_find_the_courage_to_open_up

“In this touching talk, Ash Beckham offers a fresh approach to empathy and openness. It starts with understanding that everyone, at some point in their life, has experienced hardship. The only way out, says Beckham, is to open the door and step out of your closet.”

The Courage to be Emotionally Correct, Not Just Correct - *TED Talk*:

https://www.ted.com/talks/sally_kohn_let_s_try_emotional_correctness/up-next?autoplay=true

The Courage to Be Wrong - *TED Talk*: https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn_schulz_on_being_wrong

Most of us will do anything to avoid being wrong. But what if we're wrong about that? “Wrongologist” Kathryn Schulz makes a compelling case for not just admitting but embracing our fallibility.

The Courage of Heretics - *A This American Life* Radio show:

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/304/heretics/>

The story of Rev. Carlton Pearson, a nationally-known evangelical pastor in Tulsa, Oklahoma, who cast aside the idea of Hell, and with it everything he'd worked for over his entire life. A story of a very courageous man who followed his conscience and lost just about everything. UU connection: Carlton Pearson and the remaining members of his church joined with our UU congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma! News interview with Pearson: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14337492/>

Articles

A Guide to Understanding Your Fear: <http://blog.iqmatrix.com/understanding-fear>

How To Understand And Conquer Your Fears: <http://www.vernoncoleman.com/facefear1.htm>

Thirteen Tips To Face Your Fear:

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/13-tips-to-face-your-fear-and-enjoy-the-ride.html>

What's Your Brand of Courage? <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/what's-your-brand-of-courage.html>

The Courage to Speak the Truth, but Not to Punish

by James Hoggan with Thich Nhat Hanh, excerpt from *I'm Right and You're an Idiot*:

<http://www.utne.com/community/speak-the-truth-but-not-to-punish-zm0z17szsel?pageid=1#PageContent1>

“The work seems to be about balance: speaking up against injustice with courage and passion but with greater awareness of the dangers in becoming overly adversarial and treating those who disagree as foes... Anger can give us the mettle to speak with courage and conviction, but also the venom that blinds us to the views of others...”

Books

Originals: How Nonconformists Move the World by Adam Grant:

[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/014312885X/ref=as_li_tl?](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/014312885X/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=014312885X&linkCode=as2&tag=incomm05-20&linkId=5890e336cd984813de00e0537b68a156)

[ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=014312885X&linkCode=as2&tag=incomm05-20&linkId=5890e336cd984813de00e0537b68a156](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/014312885X/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=014312885X&linkCode=as2&tag=incomm05-20&linkId=5890e336cd984813de00e0537b68a156)

The courage of nonconformity!

Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead by Brené Brown

Dancing With Dementia by Christine Bryden:

[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/184310332X/ref=as_li_tl?](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/184310332X/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=184310332X&linkCode=as2&tag=incomm05-20&linkId=27392cf4a9eb1e0ff5927c850fef8b9a)

[ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=184310332X&linkCode=as2&tag=incomm05-20&linkId=27392cf4a9eb1e0ff5927c850fef8b9a](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/184310332X/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=184310332X&linkCode=as2&tag=incomm05-20&linkId=27392cf4a9eb1e0ff5927c850fef8b9a)

Recommended by neuroscientist and author [Lisa Genova](#). After receiving a diagnosis of dementia at 48, a woman goes on to live courageously and meaningfully with early onset dementia.

To Wake, To Rise: Meditations on Justice and Resilience edited by William G. Sinkford:

<http://www.uuabookstore.org/To-Wake-To-Rise-P18187.aspx>

An anthology of 29 poems, prayers, and reflections about resisting oppression and keeping courage in a new era of political and social division.

Out Stealing Horses by Per Petterson:

“In this quiet but compelling novel, Trond Sander, a widower nearing seventy, moves to a bare house in remote eastern Norway, seeking the escape of a quiet life of contemplation. But a chance encounter with a neighbor—the brother, as it happens, of his childhood friend Jon—causes him to ruminate on the summer of 1948, the last he spent with his adored father, who abandoned the family soon afterward. Trond’s recollections center on a single afternoon, when he and Jon set out to take some horses from a nearby farm; what began as an exhilarating adventure ended abruptly and traumatically in an act of unexpected cruelty. The memories lead to a courageous effort to reconcile with the past, with Trond asking himself Dicken’s famous line in *David Copperfield*, “Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show.””

Movies and Television

Spotlight: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/spotlight_2015

“The riveting [and courageous] true story of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Boston Globe* investigation that would rock the city and cause a crisis in one of the world’s oldest and most trusted institutions. When the newspaper’s tenacious ‘Spotlight’ team of reporters delves into allegations of abuse in the Catholic Church, their year-long investigation uncovers a decades-long cover-up at the highest levels of Boston’s religious, legal, and government establishment, touching off a wave of revelations around the world.”

They Will Have to Kill Us First:

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/they_will_have_to_kill_us_first

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/reviews/view/28116/they-will-have-to-kill-us-first>

A documentary celebrating the courageous and creative use of music as a form of resistance. Set in Mali where jihadists have banned all music-making.

In This World:

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/in_this_world

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iirGjM3T5QI>

Revealing, studied window into people migration from Pakistan to the UK. Inspiring courage and humbling sacrifice at every turn; gets you rooting for the leads and challenges you to question your views on immigration.

For the Bible Tells Me So: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/for_the_bible_tells_me_so

“Grounded by the stories of five conservative Christian families, the film explores how the religious right has used its interpretation of the Bible to support its agenda of stigmatizing the gay community and eroding the separation between church and state.”

A Jihad for Love: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/a_jihad_for_love/

“Filmmaker Parvez Sharma travels into the secretive world of homosexuality within the Islamic faith. He interviews those who try to reconcile their faith with the ban on gays and lesbians, attempting to walk a fine line between persecution and honesty.”

Moonlight: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/moonlight_2016

“The tender, heartbreaking story of a young man’s courageous struggle to find himself, told across three defining chapters in his life as he experiences the ecstasy, pain, and beauty of falling in love, while grappling with his own sexuality in an oppressive suffocating culture.”

13th: <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/13th>

The courage to confront our legacy of racism. “The title of Ava DuVernay’s extraordinary and galvanizing documentary refers to the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which reads ‘Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States.’ The progression from that second qualifying clause to the horrors of mass criminalization and the sprawling American prison industry is laid out by DuVernay with bracing lucidity.”

Tomboy: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/tomboy_2011

“A French family with two daughters, 10-year-old Laure and 6-year-old Jeanne, moves to a new neighborhood during the summer holidays. With her Jean Seberg haircut and tomboy ways, Laure is immediately mistaken for a boy by the local kids and passes herself off as Michael. This is a relationship movie: relationships between children, and the even more complicated one between one’s heart and body.”

Shut Up and Sing: http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/shut_up_and_sing/

In the early 2000s, it seemed the Dixie Chicks could do no wrong. Their concert tours were consistent sellouts, making them the most commercially successful female group in the history of the recording industry. However, things took an unexpected turn as the Dixie Chicks spoke out against the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which resulted in a death threat and dozens of other personal attacks by fans. The rest of the story involves being pulled into the courage to stand up for what believe—even when the cost is great.