



Los Angeles County
District Attorney's Office

2025 COURAGE AWARDS

Wednesday, July 30, 2025

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

The Grand

4101 E. Willow Street, Long Beach CA 90815

Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Long Beach

Award Recipients

JOSE AND YRENE MENDEZ

Presented by Deputy District Attorney Peggy Kane

On September 27, 2023, Jose Mendez and his wife, Yrene Mendez, were walking along a beach when they noticed a man was beating up a 39-year-old woman. The attacker was pushing the victim into the ocean and picking her up and throwing her to the ground. The man ran away as Mr. and Mrs. Mendez came to the woman's aid. Moments later, the assailant returned and acted aggressively toward the couple, who left and called 911. By intervening and rescuing the victim, Mr. and Mrs. Mendez stopped an assault that could have resulted in a far worse outcome. Mr. Mendez also provided key testimony at trial that assisted in convicting the attacker.

ADALHI MONTES

Presented by Deputy District Attorney Kelly Fritz

On April 21, 2025, Adalhi Montes was awoken by the cries of an animal in pain. Greatly disturbed by the sickening sound and unable to return to sleep, he checked his video surveillance system and saw a man repeatedly abusing a German Shepherd puppy named Inara. The man hoisted the canine by the neck with a leash, slamming her to the pavement, and kicking her in the face while she lay motionless. He then suspended the dog again and rode away on a skateboard, dragging her out of frame. Mr. Montes posted the video online to help get the public's assistance and flagged down a police officer, providing the video to assist in the investigation. The video went viral on social media and was aired many times on local TV stations, leading to the assailant being identified and convicted.

JEANÉ CASTRO

Presented by Deputy District Attorney John Chang

Jeané Castro was sitting in a car with her good friend, Jimmy Hawkins Jr., on April 22, 2022, when a car pulled up next to them. The men inside the car made gang challenges to Hawkins Jr., and despite desperate pleas denying any gang involvement, the two men opened fire and killed Hawkins Jr. Jeané Castro ran down an alleyway as the two men pursued and fired again, striking Jeané multiple times. Despite suffering multiple gunshot wounds, she survived her injuries. With strength, courage and determination, Jeané Castro testified at trial for one of the two men who shot her. She overcame paralyzing fear and trauma to recount the terrifying ordeal she endured that helped secure a conviction.