

Mayor Rhodes-Conway: Jeffrey Clay Erlanger Award in Public Discourse Winner is Rabbi Bonnie Margulis

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Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway announced today that Rabbi Bonnie Margulis is the recipient of the 2020 Jeffrey Clay Erlanger Civility in Public Discourse Award.

The award was created by the Common Council to honor Madison residents who exemplify Jeff Erlanger's model of fairness, openness, and civility in public discourse. Jeff, who passed away in 2007, was committed to public service. He understood that through civil debate and effective representation those with varying opinions could come together on how to solve issues within the community. Mr. Erlanger served on the City of Madison's Economic Development Commission and chaired the Commission on People with Disabilities as well as the Board of Directors of the Community Living Alliance.

"I am always humbled by the caliber of Erlanger Award winners in our City, and Rabbi Bonnie Margulis is no exception," said Mayor Rhodes-Conway. "Her leadership, her compassion, her deep commitment to justice, her consensus building skills and her ability to connect with people of all walks of life are characteristics she shares with Jeff Erlanger. The work that Rabbi Bonnie has done – and continues to do – in our community, brings people together and makes our city a better place. I am so pleased that work is recognized today with this award."

Rabbi Bonnie is the founder, President and Executive Director of Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice, (WVJ) a statewide interfaith organization working toward social and economic justice on the local, state and federal levels. The organization was formed in 2011 to raise the progressive religious voice in support of low-income and underserved populations. Members are congregations, clergy, social justice

committee and people of faith from around the state with a mission to live the voices of those who are underserved, through advocacy, education and partnership.

Jeff is survived by his parents, Pam and Howard Erlanger, who stated, “We have known Rabbi Bonnie Margulis for many years, and we have always admired both what she stands for, and the way she advocates. Today more than ever, it’s important to bring people of different faiths together, to pursue a key goal of all-social justice in our world. The letters received from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish leaders attest to how Rabbi Bonnie does this in an unfailingly inclusive and collaborative style, respectful of diverse opinions. This is exactly how Jeff would do it, and she is an incredibly worthy recipient of this award.”

Each year a resident committee in Madison reviews nominations submitted by community members and selects the Erlanger Award winner. This year Dr. Erica Serlin nominated Rabbi Bonnie.

“The success of Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice and its subsidiary organizations and programs, including the Dignity at Work Coalition, the Dane Sanctuary Coalition, and the Interfaith Voter Engagement Campaign is a testament to Rabbi Bonnie’s vision and tireless dedication. Rabbi Bonnie is available almost any time night or day to provide a respectful and empathic listening ear as well as terrific resources and suggestions—all with genuine interest and no apparent ego involvement. Her desire to help create a more just society is always apparent, but plans and projects emerge organically from whatever group she works with or leads rather than from a unilateral agenda,” said Dr. Serlin. “It would be hard to imagine a nominee more qualified to receive an award honoring Jeff Erlanger’s legacy of commitment to a lifetime of public service, social justice, constructive and impactful advocacy, and a celebration of diversity.”

This is the second year that as the result of the establishment of a fund within the Madison Community Foundation, the awardee and the nominator are able to designate a \$250 contribution to the non-profit of their choice. Both Rabbi Bonnie and her nominator Dr. Serlin are designating their contribution to Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice.

The Erlanger Award is an annual recognition and will be presented at the December 1, 2020 Common Council meeting, which is the closest meeting to Jeffrey Erlanger’s birthday of November 30.