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# 2012 Ridenhour Prize Winners Announced

## *"Truth-Telling" Prize Honors Rep. John Lewis; Lt. Col. Daniel Davis; Eileen Foster; Ali H. Soufan; and the film* Semper Fi. *Awards are April 25th in Washington, DC*

New York, NY (March 22, 2012): The Fertel Foundation and The Nation Institute today announced the recipients of the ninth annual Ridenhour Prizes, which honor acts of truth-telling that protect the public interest and illuminate a more just vision of society. The Ridenhour Prizes are the only DC-based awards that celebrate courage in American life. Each winner will receive $10,000, and be honored at the National Press Club on April 25th.

**The 2012 Ridenhour Prize winners each present a portrait in courage**: A woman who blew the whistle on one of the biggest financial frauds in history; a dedicated military man who spoke out to protect his fellow soldiers; a lead interrogator for the FBI who warned against torture in a groundbreaking 2011 book; a film about the Marine who uncovered one of the largest water contamination incidents in US history; and a hero of the civil rights movement who is still fights for justice.

**"For almost a decade, these awards have made Ron Ridenhour's legacy of courage and fidelity to the truth a living one,"** said Randy Fertel, Founder of the Fertel Foundation, which co-sponsors the prizes. "We are so humbled each year by the extraordinary men and women who join the Ridenhour family. The winners inspire us and renew our faith that brave words spoken in challenging times are the most powerful antidote to evil. "

**"At a time when our nation hungers for integrity in public life, The Ridenhour Prizes shine a bright light on those who are dedicated to the hard, often lonely work of truth-telling,"** said Andy Breslau, President of The Nation Institute, which co-sponsors the Prizes. "The 2012 winners are a tonic against easy cynicism and a call to all of us to do better. "

The prizes memorialize Ron Ridenhour, who blew the whistle on the My Lai massacre in the Vietnam War and went on to become an award-winning investigative journalist. He died in 1998 at the age of 52.

## The 2012 Ridenhour Prize honorees are:

**The Honorable Representative John Lewis**
*The Ridenhour Courage Prize*

Often called "one of the most courageous persons the Civil Rights Movement ever produced," John Lewis has dedicated his life to protecting human rights, securing civil liberties, and building what he calls "The Beloved Community" in America. His dedication to the highest ethical standards and moral principles has won him the admiration of many of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the United States Congress.

**Eileen Foster**
*The Ridenhour Prize for Truth-Telling*

Whistleblower Eileen Foster, the recipient of the 2012 Ridenhour Prize for Truth-Telling, exposed systemic fraud at the nation's largest mortgage provider, Countrywide Financial. Her actions go a long way in exposing the fact that fraud on the part of commission-hungry loan officers — not borrowers lying on their loan applications — fuelled the increase in toxic mortgages, which in large part gave rise to the 2008 economic crash.

*This is the first time there have been two recipients of the Prize for Truth-Telling.*

**Lt. Col. Daniel Davis**
*The Ridenhour Prize for Truth-Telling*
Lt. Col. Daniel Davis is the recipient of the 2012 Ridenhour Prize for Truth-Telling for bravely speaking out against senior military leadership and their deceptive portrayal of the war in Afghanistan. To date, he is the only active duty serviceperson to have detailed the gross discrepancies between the reality on the ground in Afghanistan and the message of progress that is communicated to the US Congress and the American people.

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**Ali H. Soufan**
*The Ridenhour Book Prize*

Ali H. Soufan has been awarded the 2012 Ridenhour Book Prize for *The Black Banners: The Inside Story of 9/11 and the War Against al-Qaeda*. Soufan is one of America's leading counterterrorism investigators; with *The Black Banners*, he has written the definitive history of al-Qaeda, and provides irrefutable evidence that torture is not only antithetical to American values, but produces false and dangerous information.

**Semper Fi: Always Faithful**
*The Ridenhour Documentary Film Prize*

Rachel Libert and Tony Hardmon have been awarded the 2012 Ridenhour Documentary Film Prize for *Semper Fi: Always Faithful,* the chronicle of one determined Marine, Master Sgt. Jerry Ensminger, whose quest to understand the reasons for his daughter's early death pitted him against the organization to which he had pledged to be *semper fidelis*, or "always faithful."

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Interviews are available with all 5 winners, and the co-sponsors of the awards. Limited seating at the event is available for media at the April 25th award ceremony, 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. at the National Press Club. Past winners and more information is at www.ridenhour.org, and at www.twitter.com/nationinstitute, under the "#ridenhour" tag.

**About The Ridenhour Prizes**

The Ridenhour Prizes recognize and encourage those who persevere in acts of truth-telling that protect the public interest, promote social justice or illuminate a more just vision of society. The prizes are named after investigative journalist Ron Ridenhour, to commemorate his lifetime of fearless truth-telling and to inspire others to do the same.

In 1969, Vietnam veteran Ron Ridenhour wrote a letter to Congress and the Pentagon describing the horrific events at My Lai — the infamous massacre of the Vietnam War. Although the upper echelons of the military establishment resisted his revelations, his dogged persistence eventually brought the scandal to the attention of the American public and the world at large.

Ridenhour later became a respected investigative journalist, winning the George Polk Award for Investigative Journalism in 1987 for a yearlong investigation of a New Orleans tax scandal. He died suddenly in 1998 at the age of 52. At the time of his death, he was working on an article for the *London Review of Books,* had co-produced a story on state militias for NBC's Dateline, and had just delivered a series of lectures commemorating the 30th anniversary of My Lai.

The Ridenhour Prizes were established by The Nation Institute and The Fertel Foundation in partnership with The Fund for Constitutional Government, Government Accountability Project, and The Project on Government Oversight. For more information visit www.ridenhour.org .

**About The Nation Institute**

A nonprofit media center, The Nation Institute was established to extend the reach of progressive ideas and strengthen the independent press. Our dynamic range of programs include a bestselling book publishing imprint, Nation Books; our award-winning Investigative Fund, which supports groundbreaking investigative journalism; the widely read and syndicated website TomDispatch; our internship program at the *Nation* magazine; and Journalism Fellowships that fund up to 20 high-profile reporters every year. Work produced by The Nation Institute has sparked Congressional hearings, new legislation, FBI investigations and the resignation of government officials, has changed the debate and has a regular impact on the most urgent social and political issues of our day. For more information visit www.nationinstitute.org.

**About the Fertel Foundation**

Energized by a passion for weaving ideas and people together, the Fertel Foundation, based in New York and New Orleans, has a special interest in initiatives from which new communities and new insights may emerge and those that challenge entrenched communities of power. For more information, visit www.fertel.com.