

**THE 5TH ANNUAL  
RIDENHOUR  
PRIZES**  
Fostering the Spirit of Courage and Truth

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**2008 Ridenhour Prize Recipients Announced**  
*Prizes to be Presented at National Press Club on April 3*

*Five-Year Milestone for Prizes That Recognize Individuals  
For Courageous Stands That Strengthen Democracy and the Public Interest;  
Prizes, Named for My Lai Whistleblower, Mark 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Of the Vietnam Era Massacre*

Washington, D.C. – The Nation Institute and The Fertel Foundation today announced the winners of the 2008 Ridenhour Prizes, which will be awarded on **April 3 at the National Press Club** in Washington, D.C.

Since their creation five years ago, The Ridenhour Prizes have honored the remarkable courage and social contribution of individuals who have spoken out on unpopular social and political themes. The prizes seek to promote the critical values of dissent and open debate, and with this year's outstanding recipients, they once again recognize individuals who have courageously spoken out—often at great personal risk—against injustice, corruption and incompetence in the public and private spheres. Each prize is accompanied by a \$10,000 cash award.

The prize recipients for this year are as follows:

- ▶ **Bill Moyers** has been awarded **The Ridenhour Courage Prize** in recognition of his unique voice, courageous and persistent defense of the public interest and passionate commitment to social justice. From his service as one of the original organizers of the Peace Corps to his founding of Public Affairs Television, Moyers has dedicated his life to ensuring that the media work to preserve and strengthen our democracy. His next book, *Moyers on Democracy*, will be published in 2008.

Past recipients of The Ridenhour Courage Prize are President Jimmy Carter, Gloria Steinem, Seymour Hersh and Daniel Ellsberg.

- ▶ **Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Diaz** has been awarded **The Ridenhour Prize for Truth-Telling**. Diaz is a former JAG officer who, while stationed at Guantánamo Bay, was the first person to release the names of the prisoners at the detention camp. Despite the Supreme Court's June 29, 2004 decision, *Rasul v. Bush*, to uphold prisoners' rights to challenge their incarceration, Diaz realized that the Bush administration was doing everything in its power to stall the release of prisoners' names to the public. In early January 2005, on the last night of his tour, he mailed a list—with the names and corresponding serial numbers

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of the 551 prisoners—in a Valentine’s Day card to a lawyer at the Center for Constitutional Rights. Diaz hoped that his actions would help lawyers file *habeas corpus* petitions on the prisoners’ behalf.

But after the attorney (to whom he had sent the list) consulted a judge, CCR was instructed to turn it over to a federal agent. Once the leak was traced to Diaz, he was tried in a military court, found guilty on four of five charges and sentenced to six months in prison. He lost his pension, was later decertified as a JAG officer and may yet be suspended from practicing law. His case is on appeal and should be given another hearing within this year. The Ridenhour Prize for Truth-Telling honors Matthew Diaz for his courageous decision to reveal the names of the prisoners at Guantánamo Bay. With this act, he broke ranks and violated the law, and for that he has paid a serious price. But he also demonstrated a profound loyalty to the United States and its enduring constitutional principles.

Past recipients of The Ridenhour Prize for Truth-Telling are American contractor in Iraq turned FBI whistleblower Donald Vance; science policy expert Rick Piltz, who revealed the Bush administration efforts to manipulate and censor the communication of scientific findings on global climate change; 9/11 widow and activist Kristen Breitweiser; and former Ambassador Joseph Wilson.

- ▶ **James D. Scurlock**, author of *Maxed Out: Hard Times in the Age of Easy Credit* and award-winning director of the accompanying documentary *Maxed Out*, has been awarded **The Ridenhour Book Prize** for his disturbing account of America’s unsustainable relationship with debt, revealing the vulnerability of the average person to the predatory and unethical lending methods of banks and credit card companies. As the impact of the subprime mess continues to reverberate across the economy with Citibank, Bear Stearns and Merrill Lynch reporting losses in the billions of dollars and repossessions reaching unprecedented levels, *Maxed Out* holds a mirror to America’s culture of debt and reveals how the dream of easy credit is often nothing more than a dangerous mirage.

Past recipients of The Ridenhour Book Prize are Rajiv Chandrasekaran, author of *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq’s Green Zone*; Anthony Shadid, author of *Night Draws Near: Iraq’s People in the Shadow of America’s War*; Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, author of *Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble, and Coming of Age in the Bronx*; and Deborah Scroggins, author of *Emma’s War: An Aid Worker, Radical Islam and the Politics of Oil – A True Story of Love and Death in the Sudan*.

“Even in as great a nation as ours, speaking out against injustice takes unbelievable courage,” said **Hamilton Fish, president of The Nation Institute, a co-sponsor of the prizes**. “For five years, it’s been the mission of The Ridenhour Prizes to honor and support truth-tellers. It’s an unfortunate fact that people who tell us the hard truths risk their reputations and livelihoods, and frequently face retaliation. We need to work to make our society more open, not less; more

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transparent, not less; more democratic, not less. That’s what Ron Ridenhour worked for all his life, and it’s that fight that we honor again today.”

“Truth-telling is never popular, and often feared,” said **Randy Fertel, founder of The Fertel Foundation, co-sponsor of the prizes.** “Without it, there is almost no check on institutional power. Corporations and those in public service can do whatever they like if people aren’t brave enough to come forward and make wrongdoing public. The tougher the challenges our society faces, the more important it is for people with integrity and courage to speak up and hold others accountable to the public. That is Ron Ridenhour’s legacy and it distinguishes the work of this year’s prize recipients.”

### **About The Ridenhour Prizes**

The Ridenhour Prizes seek to 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.

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.

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 militias for NBC’s Dateline and had just delivered a series of lectures commemorating the 30th anniversary of My Lai. March 16, 2008 marked the 40th 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 about the Ridenhour Prizes, go to [www.ridenhour.org](http://www.ridenhour.org)

### **About The Nation Institute**

Founded in 1966, The Nation Institute has a commitment to the values of free speech and open discourse. The Institute places particular importance on strengthening the independent press in the face of America’s increasingly corporate-controlled flow of information, and through its programs the Institute promotes progressive values on a variety of media platforms. The Institute sponsors a number of projects including conferences, seminars, televised town hall-style

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meetings, web newsletters, book publishing, social justice awards, investigative reporting, film production, journalism fellowships and internships.

For more information go to [www.nationinstitute.org](http://www.nationinstitute.org)

**About The Fertel Foundation**

Energized by a passion for weaving ideas and people together, the Fertel Foundation seeks to foster projects related to the arts and education. The Foundation, established in 2000, is especially interested in initiatives from which new communities and new insights may emerge, and those that challenge entrenched communities of power. It also devotes considerable funding to projects within its overall mission that help rebuild a better New Orleans—and create national models—in a post-Katrina world.

For more information go to [www.fertel.com](http://www.fertel.com)

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