

Ridenhour Prizes Co-Founder Randy Fertel Praises Former '60 Minutes' Correspondent Sharyn Alfonsi's Bravery

Fertel, This Year's Ridenhour Prizes Keynote Speaker, Says Alfonsi Embodies the Spirit of the late Investigative Journalist Ron Ridenhour

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, May 28, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Confirmation today that CBS

“

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Randy Fertel

News has officially parted ways with "60 Minutes" correspondent Sharyn Alfonsi prompted immediate, critical response from Randy Fertel, Co-Founder of the annual Ridenhour Prizes for Courage and Truth-Telling. Alfonsi was a co-recipient of this year's annual Ridenhour Prize for Courage, which she accepted just last month with a stirring speech at the National Press Club in Washington.

The Ridenhour Prizes, which were founded in 2004 and celebrated their 21st year at the April National Press Club gathering, “recognize those who persevere in acts of truth-telling that protect the public interest, promote social justice or illuminate a more just vision of society.”

Alfonsi received this year's Ridenhour Courage Prize following her publicly visible disagreement with CBS News Editor-in-Chief Bari Weiss over Weiss's decision to pull Alfonsi's completed "60 Minutes" report about the U.S. deportation of Venezuelans to El Salvador's feared CECOT prison. The segment was aired in January instead of its planned December release, with Alfonsi claiming that Weiss “spiked” the segment to maintain political favor with the Trump administration. Weiss countered that the piece did not include a full-throated response from the administration. According to Alfonsi, the administration declined several invitations from "60 Minutes" to do so, even when given more time by the air delay.

“I will not linger on the internal mechanics of the dust-up at CBS that led to our CECOT story being pulled, but we have to be honest about what it represents,” Alfonsi remarked in her acceptance speech. “It wasn't an isolated editorial argument. In my view, it was the result of a more aggressive contagion: the spread of corporate meddling and editorial fear. It's hard to watch.”

Randy Fertel, co-founder of the Ridenhour Prizes and this year's keynote speaker, said that the committee's decision to award Alfonsi the Courage Prize, and her acceptance despite her acknowledgement that her position was in jeopardy, has ramifications far beyond CBS's decision.

"The Ridenhour Prizes have never seemed so urgent or so essential," remarked Fertel in his speech. "Our 21-year project to support whistleblowers and truth-tellers has run headlong into a blizzard of dog whistles, alt-facts, gaslighting, glittery objects, and brazen lies."

Journalist and whistleblower Ron Ridenhour was only 23 years old when he penned a letter to Congress about the atrocities committed by the American military in Vietnam, namely the 'My Lai' village massacre of March 16, 1968. Some 504 unarmed Vietnamese civilians were murdered by US personnel under the guise of clearing the village of "Viet Cong regulars." Ridenhour's bravery gained him both respect and infamy, and inspired Fertel, his friend, to create the Ron Ridenhour Prizes for Courage and Truth-Telling upon Ridenhour's sudden death in 1998.

"Sharyn Alfonsi's courage and journalistic integrity mirror that of Ron Ridenhour's spirit and commitment to truth-telling," Fertel said today upon learning of the upheaval at "60 Minutes." "Sharyn Alfonsi was a natural pick for the 2026 Courage Award, especially given the career-altering blowback she has endured at the hands of CBS."

"Through a 21-year run, the Ridenhour Prizes have functioned as a means to honor those just like Sharyn who boldly stand up for honesty and transparency in American society and journalism," Fertel added.

Randy Fertel can be contacted via Blue Highway Advisory for interviews and immediate comment regarding the decision to give Alfonsi the 2026 Ridenhour Prize for Courage (along with former "60 Minutes" Executive Producer Bill Owens), and on Ron Ridenhour's legacy as an investigative reporter, as well as the history of the Ridenhour Prizes and the future of truth-telling journalism in America.

Randy Fertel is a Harvard-educated academic, philanthropist and author. He has authored three books, with the most recent being "Winging It: Improv's Power and Peril in the Time of Trump." He is also president of the Fertel Foundation and the Ruth U. Fertel Foundation, named for his mother Ruth Fertel, founder of Ruth's Chris Steak House. He lives in New Orleans and New York.

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