# 2026 DINNER and AWARDS for ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Jordyn Holman (FASPE Journalism 2018)
Distinguished Fellow Award

I want to start off by thanking FASPE, an organization that has poured so much into me over the past eight years. I specifically want to send thanks to David, Rebecca, Mia, Maya and Thorsten – or as my fellow alums and I lovingly refer to you as – "FASPE Central." I want to thank my parents who are here with me tonight – William and Tris Holman. You two are truly the best parents and have given me everything that I have ever needed, most importantly you gave me the foundation of my faith and character. I also want to thank the two news organizations where I have spent my career: first at Bloomberg News and my current employer, The New York Times. When everything is changing in the media industry, both of these institutions feel like ports in the storm for journalists and give us the ability to focus on our craft and do our best work.

When I was thinking of what to say tonight, the phrase "power concedes nothing without a demand" kept coming up. This phrase was made famous by Frederick Douglass in 1857, four years before the Civil War began, and six years before my ancestors were freed from slavery.

I've always thought about this phrase as a declaration to those with no power to wrestle it back. But what if Frederick Douglass was also reminding us that power isn't stagnant. For those in power, we actively decide what to do with it.

As professionals, we may shy away from the reality that we have power. We can underestimate the role we play in society. We may think, "Oh I'm just doing my job. This is just one small decision in a chain of decisions. What power do I really have to impact an outcome?"

Journalism is a unique profession. Unlike law, medicine or theology, journalism has no bar exam, state license or ordination. You become a journalist the moment you commit to the work. That means our power isn't granted by an external authority or a piece of paper – it is earned, maintained and guarded solely through our professional standards and ethics. And if journalists like me don't spend every day doing the work we must do, then we are conceding our power. Our power in this society is to bring truth, to bring accountability and to bring light to issues. Journalism is so important that it was the only profession that our founders outlined and protected in the U.S. Constitution.

Like the novelist Alice Walker said: "The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any."

What would happen if we, the journalists and other professionals, acknowledged this power we have? What would happen if we don't concede on the truth, on holding politicians, executives,

big tech, law firms and universities accountable, on holding ourselves accountable? What FASPE does is take professionals early on – it seeks out the 24-year-old who is just beginning to recognize her power as a journalist – and really makes us consider this: Standards and ethics mean nothing if we all don't uphold them.

Power concedes nothing without a demand. Professionals are powerful. We must keep fighting, to keep doing what's right, stand strong and firm in the face of those who would rather we just be quiet, not ask the tough and uncomfortable questions and let them do what they do. No, we're going to do what our profession demands of us. What we demand of ourselves. Every day.

Thank you so much for this recognition. It is such an honor.

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This is the full context of Frederick Douglass's 1857 speech (emphasis Jordyn's):

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the roar of its mighty waters. **The struggle may be a moral one or it may be a physical one, or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand.** It never has and it never will. **Find out just what a people will submit to, and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them;** and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. **The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress…**

**Men may not get all they pay for in this world, but they must certainly pay for all they get.** If we ever get free from the oppression and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. W**e must do this by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice, and, if needs be, by our lives and the lives of others."**