

# Culture Warrior of the Year: Ronan Farrow



It's been quite some time since anyone (other than President Trump) has taken Time Magazine's annual *Person of the Year* issue particularly seriously. Once a renowned recognition of highly influential individuals, this industry hallmark has lost much of its luster over the years.

Part of the reason is the decline in popularity of print-publications, especially in the realm of the news media where – thanks to the Internet – national stories now become old news within a matter of hours. *Time* is an *old media* institution fighting to stay relevant in a *new media* world, where it's competing with everyone from 24/7 cable channels to popular blogging websites. And in a market so saturated, the advantages of nostalgia and tradition can't always be relied upon.

Unhelpful to the situation has been *Time's* rather eye-rolling selections for their marquee issue over the years, especially when the magazine chooses to go the composite (and somewhat

lazy) route of romanticizing *movements* rather than settling on an individual. In 2005, it was “The Good Samaritans.” In 2011, they went with “The Protester.” My personal favorite was 2006’s “You”.

Riveting.

Still, I’ve always liked at least the *concept* of *Time’s* Person of the Year, which has long been billed as the recognition of who “has done the most to influence the events of the year...for better or for worse.” It’s a premise I find intriguing. And for that reason, I have shamelessly stolen it, and used it for a new annual feature here on BernardGoldberg.com: *Daly’s Culture Warrior of the Year*.

This column will be kind of like the *Time* issue, except that no one has ever heard of it, would pay money for it, or will remember it by next week. Also, instead of determining the most influential person in the world, I have gone the *nationalist* route of focusing on America – specifically American culture, and who has influenced it the most in 2017.

Determining this person was no easy task. The country saw a cultural tsunami during the 2016 election cycle – one that has certainly carried over into this year. Our new political landscape has changed the hearts and minds of millions of Americans. Behavior once deemed unacceptable by one side of the political divide is now rationalized and even emulated in those quarters, while the other side watches helplessly (but not silently) as years of politically-correct overreach and cultural gains blow up in their faces.

But there was a different, more noble revolution that boldly planted its flag in 2017. It has transcended American politics (though political figures have by no means been immune to it), and it continues to rattle dominant industries to their very core.

Some call it the #MeToo movement. Others frame it as a war on

institutionalized sexual harassment. I see it as a *draining of the swamp* – a swamp filled with sexual-predator entitlement.

I'm talking about the highly-publicized chain of events that arguably began with Ronan Farrow's groundbreaking exposé on Harvey Weinstein, which detailed the experiences of 13 women with sexual misconduct accusations (including rape) against the famed Hollywood producer. And I use the word "entitlement" because this is a component of the problem that I don't think people like me previously grasped.

Women have had a better understanding of it, and for some time. According to a recent Quinnipiac poll, 60% of women in America have faced sexual harassment, in one form or another.

Most men, on the other hand, tend to think of sexual predators as faceless lowlifes who peep through windows and wait outside women's apartment buildings under a hood. While we've long understood, of course, that sexual malfeasance also goes on in the workplace, the discovery that industry titans have been engaging in such behavior, with "open secret" impunity (over a span of decades, in some cases), was a real awakening.

In fact, listening to the audio of Weinstein pressuring model Ambra Battilana Gutierrez into a sexual situation was so shocking to me that it made me physically ill.

When the Bill Cosby accusers came forward, I think most people viewed the entertainer as an aberration (or maybe that's what we *hoped*). When Roger Ailes and others at Fox went down, the political hits came, but society was largely unfazed. It wasn't until the Weinstein story came along that a cultural sea-change began.

Farrow's fearless reporting (in the face of lawsuit threats and his network not wanting to feature the story) thoroughly exposed an enormously powerful man whose years of sexual deviancy killed the careers and altered the lives of dozens of women... all while that man amassed more power under the

protection of Hollywood and the political class.

That reporting let actresses (who'd kept their stories secret for years) know that they finally had a voice – not just in Farrow, but also in Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, whose piece about Weinstein paying off sexual harassment accusers ran in the *New York Times* just a few days earlier. This gave more and more victims the strength to come forward against Weinstein, with the count currently standing around 80.

Of course, the momentum didn't stop at Weinstein. Credible charges of sexual harassment have since been leveled against dozens of powerful men, including high-ranking politicians, A-list celebrities, national journalists, and corporate CEOs. And that list seems to grow almost daily.

Additionally, the political ramifications of the story recently led to the discovery that potentially millions of dollars of taxpayers' money have been used to secretly settle sexual harassment charges against members of the U.S. Congress.

Make no mistake about it: This is a watershed moment in this country.

What we're witnessing is a societal awakening, and it's a very good thing for the cultural fabric of our nation. Using positions of power for sexual exploitation should never be tolerated, and as Peggy Noonan wrote in a recent piece for *The Wall Street Journal*, "sexual predators are now on notice."

And it was all made possible by exactly the type of gutsy, quality journalism we often complain no longer exists in this country. Perhaps more ironically, it came from a journalist who many (especially conservatives like me) previously considered a lightweight: Ronan Farrow.

The women who've been brave enough to speak out about their ordeals are the real victors in this story, but without

Farrow's steadfast work, I'm not convinced that what we've been seeing over the past several weeks would have ever come to fruition.

For that reason, Ronan Farrow wins this year's prestigious *Daly's Culture Warrior of the Year* nod, and I'm hoping more people in his profession follow his lead in taking genuine risks to speak truth to power.



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