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Courage, Service, and the Pursuit of Truth

Myroslava Gongadze
2023 Inamori Ethics Prize Recipient
September 21, 2023

Honored guests, please welcome Interim Provost and Executive Vice President, Joy K. Ward.

WARD: Good evening, everyone, please join me in thanking the Hyrhory Kytasty Cleveland School of Bandura at St. Vladimir's Ukrainian Orthodox Church Cultural Center for their outstanding performance. I am most honored to welcome you to the 2023 Inamori Ethics Prize Ceremony at Case Western Reserve's Maltz Performing Arts Center. This award and the Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence are made possible through the visionary philanthropy of the late Dr. Kazuo Inamori and the Foundation that bears his name.

I would like to begin by recognizing representatives from the Inamori Foundation joining us here tonight. I ask that you please stand so that we can acknowledge you. Mr. Shoichi Himono, executive managing director of the Inamori Foundation, Ms. Kana Okutani, and Ms. Sayaka Hiroki. We are so grateful that you are able to travel here from Kyoto to be here with us for these important events. President Kaler and other leaders from Case Western Reserve look forward to seeing you in Japan this fall. We would also like to recognize all of the donors and community partners for helping us make the activities of the Inamori Center, including this important event, possible. Special thanks to our donors, Inamori Center advisory board members, and community partners who have joined us in the audience and are watching us on the livestream. We thank you all for helping us continue our tradition of honoring global ethical leadership. Tonight's ceremony has several other community and campus partnerships noted on the Inamori Center website. We are grateful to each of them for recognizing the significance of this event and helping us make it better. Thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge Don Richards, a member of our board of trustees who is in the audience today. Thank you Don, and thank you

to all of our trustees and emeriti who are joining us on the live stream. Also among us are several government officials who have sent letters of commendation or proclamations to recognize our honorary tonight. They include Senator Sherrod Brown, Congresswoman Shontel Brown, Governor Mike Dewine, Ohio State Senator Nickie Antonio, Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb, and Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne. We appreciate their support and their leadership. Thank you so much.

It is a great privilege to present the 2023 Inamori Ethics Prize to honor global ethical leadership. The remarkable group of recipients has included leaders in genetics, business, environment, philosophy, the creative arts, law, and human rights. All have dedicated their careers to driving their respective fields to embrace exemplary ethical practices by their actions and by their example. This year, joining this esteemed group is Myroslava Gongadze, a courageous international journalist, and free press and human rights advocate. Ms. Gongadze's actions embody Dr. Inamori's belief that "people have no higher calling than to serve the greater good of humankind." We are able to give this annual prize at this exceptional celebration due to the outstanding vision of Dr. Inamori, who sadly passed away in August of last year. We appreciate our deep longstanding relationship with the Inamori Foundation, which began with Dr. Inamori's friendship with Arthur Hoyer, Case Western Reserve's distinguished university professor emeritus and professor emeritus of ceramics, material sciences, and engineering, and now continues with Dr. Inamori's daughter and president of the Inamori Foundation, Ms. Shinobu Inamori Kanazawa. Our students, faculty, and staff, as well as the local and global community have benefited immeasurably from the superb work of the Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence and to advancing Dr. Inamori's philosophy of doing what is right as a human being. This philosophy is now etched on a memorial bench placed on our campus in Dr. Inamori's honor under a new dogwood tree, planted in his name. Again, we are so grateful to our colleagues at the Inamori Foundation for joining us. Now, please direct your attention to the screen above to hear about our partnership and the incredible life and legacy of Dr. Inamori.

[Video Plays]: Born in Kagoshima, Japan, Kazuo Inamori was the second of seven children. When he was thirteen, he was bedridden with tuberculosis for several months. To help him pass the time, a neighbor lent him a book. It sparked a lifelong interest in Buddhism.

After graduating from Kagoshima University, he worked for a company in Kyoto. At age twenty-seven, with a \$10,000 line of credit, he founded Kyocera Corporation, which made precision ceramics, to tackle the toughest engineering challenges. Nearly a quarter century later, Dr. Inamori founded a long-distance phone company which grew to become KEDDI, Japan's second largest telecom carrier.

In 1984, he donated his own resources to establish the nonprofit Inamori Foundation and create the esteemed Kyoto Prize which honors individuals who have contributed to the betterment of mankind. In 2005, Case Western Reserve was honored to receive a ten-million-dollar gift from the Inamori Foundation to launch the Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence. In 2010, the Japanese government asked Dr. Inamori to take the helm of the failing Japan Airlines. With no experience in this industry and without any salary, he turned the company around within three years. In 2022, at the age of ninety, Kazuo Inamori died in his home. He is survived by his wife Asako and a daughter Shinobu Inamori Kazawa, who now leads the Inamori Foundation. This fall, Case Western Reserve will dedicate a memorial bench and plant a tree on campus in Dr. Inamori's honor. Our campus community is profoundly grateful to Dr. Inamori and the Inamori Foundation for our partnership to create a more ethical world.

I am now pleased to introduce the director of the Inamori Center for Ethics and Excellence, philosophy professor and globally acclaimed ethicist Shannon French, who serves as both our Inamori Professor in Ethics and the General Hugh Shelton distinguished visiting chair in ethics for the US Army Command and Staff College Foundation. Professor French also leads Case Western Reserve's unique graduate degree program in military ethics and conducts cutting edge research on ethics of emerging technologies including artificial intelligence.

FRENCH: Thank you so much, Provost Ward. It's a pleasure to see you all, and it's a pleasure to be here again at the beautiful Maltz Performing Arts Center. Thank you for coming. This summer, I had the great privilege of meeting war-weary Ukrainian families who had traveled to Austria to attend what was called a healing base camp. This was run by the international nonprofit, Mountain Seed Foundation. During the week I was there with my daughter, we hosted twenty-three Ukrainian children, ages five to fifteen, all of whom had lost at least one family member, in most cases their fathers, in the illegal and unjustified Russian invasion of their country. We

were also joined by some of the children's widowed mothers, by a father who had previously fought in the war, but was now caring for the children while his wife serves in the Ukrainian Army, and an indefatigable grandmother raising her young granddaughter, who lost part of her right leg in the same bomb that killed her mother. These families were suffering from the trauma of an ongoing conflict that was made worse by the injustice of how it was conducted, how it is still being conducted, with Russia intentionally targeting civilians and committing other atrocities such as torture and rape. Understandably, they were wary of what this experience had to offer. Although they were worn down, bereaved, and exhausted, there was nevertheless still spirit in them to try. Under the guidance and instruction of the Mountain Seed volunteers, these children who had been through so much literally learned how to climb every mountain. They even climbed one enormous reservoir dam, mastering the Via Ferrata, which is a climbing method that was originally designed in World War I to help troops traverse the Alps. They were joined on these climbs by two of my former students, Nathan Schmidt, who founded Mountain Seed Foundation after serving as a marine in Iraq, and Dan Cnossen, who became a Paralympian after losing both of his legs as a Navy SEAL in Afghanistan. Both of these young men had been broken by war, suffering physical and moral injury, but they had found new purpose and meaning. By the end of that week, even the kids who had originally shown fear or reluctance facing those heights successfully summited the mighty Kitzsteinhorn Mountain, bursting with pride at what they had achieved. We saw smiles on every one of their faces. Meanwhile, the children's mothers and guardians received practical and therapeutic support, gaining new tools to sustain them when they return to their homeland. Needless to say, it was profoundly humbling and inspiring to see people who had every right to feel nothing but anger and bitterness, to turn away from the world, to turn inward, and retreat from life, life that had treated them unfairly. But instead they were willing to launch themselves into new experiences, new risks and challenges actively growing their own resiliency, proving the courage and strength of spirit that they had inside. Proving it to us, but much more importantly, proving it to themselves.

None of us can control what tragedies befall us or what obstacles we'll face, but how we respond to them is what defines our character. Leading an ethical life is about finding a way to flourish, to fight for a better future. I witnessed that commitment in every person who attended that camp. In the words you just heard, from Dr. Inamori, "Life is about making a

continuous effort to move forward with a positive attitude while enduring whatever misfortune or mishap might occur.” Well, I saw that philosophy being lived on a mountainside in Austria. I see it again in the woman we are here to honor tonight. Myroslava Gongadze is a shining example of character overcoming circumstance.

In a moment, you will hear much more about her from Provost Ward. But let me share just a glimpse of her story now. Myroslava was already making the world a better place by pursuing the life of a journalist, bringing information and answers out into the light. When her husband was kidnapped and brutally murdered, she showed tremendous courage, continuing her work and raising two amazing daughters alone, who are here with us tonight. But she didn't stop there. She fought what has become a global struggle to gain justice for her husband and expose corrupt authorities, and her example helped spark a revolution that brought new hope to Ukraine. Surely that was enough? Not for Myroslava. Understanding the old saying that “truth is the first casualty of war,” since the war began in 2022, she has reported the truth on this conflict for the Voice of America, refusing to yield any ground to Russian architects of disinformation. Ladies and gentlemen, this is what ethical leadership looks like.

We all face battles large and small in our lives. We all, at one time or another, know pain, loss, fear, and self-doubt. Yet we're all capable of choosing not to be defined by what has happened to us, by what we cannot control, but instead to define ourselves by what we can control. We can take the ethical path, reclaim our power, use our talents for good, and do our part to resist injustice and pursue the truth. On the stage beside me is a doll, a unique gift from The Inamori Foundation in Japan. It represents the virtue of altruism. Myroslava will be receiving a doll, not identical, but a unique doll of her own, similar to this one, from the Inamori Foundation to remind her of this time with us. I hope when all of us think about this night, we are reminded that we are at our best when we look beyond ourselves and recognize that with a little courage and some faith in humanity, we really can climb and even move mountains. Thank you.

Now, please join me in welcoming back to the podium interim provost and executive vice president Joy Ward, who will tell you more about this year's outstanding Inamori Ethics Prize honoree.

WARD: Thank you, Shannon. Members of the audience, the leadership and faculty of Case Western Reserve University understand that one of our core values as educators is to graduate individuals who are engaged

with a wider world and who are responsible global citizens. It is with the intention of inspiring them, and all of us, that tonight it is my pleasure to introduce to you our honoree, Myroslava Gongadze.

In the arenas of journalism and human rights advocacy, few names resonate as powerfully as that of Myroslava Gongadze, a relentless seeker of truth, an unyielding advocate for justice, and a dedicated journalist. Myroslava's life and work have left an indelible mark on both the media landscape and the pursuit of ethical human rights. With a career spanning decades in a commitment to upholding the values of integrity and freedom, Myroslava's journey is both harrowing and inspirational. Born in a period of political and social upheaval, Myroslava's life was shaped by the evolving landscape of her home country of Ukraine. Taking an active interest in civic law and legal matters, Myroslava attended the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv and earned a master's degree in civic law. With an insatiable appetite for knowledge and a strong desire to find the truth, she was ultimately led to a career in journalism. Myroslava has said of her hunt for the truth, "Today, the truth for me is the fact. We need to look for facts and draw conclusions based on facts, but not on our own interpretation of facts. Comparison and analysis of facts lead us to the truth. When we deny facts we undermine the foundations of our democratic society."

Myroslava's name has since become synonymous with one of the most high-profile cases in Ukraine's history—the tragic death of her husband, Georgiy Gongadze. Georgiy was a prominent investigative journalist whose unwavering dedication to exposing corruption and challenging the status quo earned him powerful adversaries. In the late 1990s, Myroslava collaborated with Georgiy in publications opposing the administration of Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma. In 2000, soon after establishing the first and now popular online publication in Ukraine, Georgiy Gongadze was kidnapped and brutally murdered. The plot directly implicated Kuchma's administration. Georgiy's abduction and subsequent murder sent shockwaves through the nation and the global journalistic community. Myroslava's response, however, was not one of defeat. It was a call to action. Determining to unveil the truth behind her husband's death, Myroslava embarked on a crusade for justice. Though Myroslava and their children received asylum in the United States in 2001, she continued to demand justice for her late husband and for the role of law in Ukraine. In 2002, she filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights against President Kuchma's government, contending her husband's death was the result of a forced disappearance and that

the Ukrainian authorities failed to protect him. She also maintained that the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty forced her to leave the country and caused her suffering. She won this case, and the European Court of Human Rights concluded that the domestic investigation was corrupt and violated international human rights laws. The case has since become a precedent for many Ukrainians who could not find justice in their homeland.

Her pursuit for answers and her unrelenting demands for transparency galvanized public sentiment and ignited a movement for accountability. Her vocal opposition to the authoritarian nature of the administration and the controversy resulting from this tragic crime were major catalysts to the Orange Revolution of 2004. The Orange Revolution was a series of protests and political events that took place in the aftermath of the runoff vote of the Ukrainian presidential election. The election was marred by corruption, voter intimidation, and electoral fraud. As a result of this three-month protest, the rigged vote was declared void, and new elections were held, which were judged to be free and fair by international observers. Since 2004, Myroslava has continued to demonstrate global ethical leadership in her journalism. She has been a television and radio correspondent for Voice of America, a correspondent for Radio Free Europe, a visiting scholar at George Washington University, and a fellow at Harvard University. In 2015, Myroslava became the head of the Ukrainian service at Voice of America. She has interviewed many notable political figures including US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, Ukrainian president Zelensky, and many others. Today, Voice of America is widely considered the most trusted news source in Ukraine, watched by five million viewers there and many more worldwide. In December of 2021, Voice of America named Myroslava the network's first Eastern Europe Chief. She is now temporarily in Europe leading coverage of the region. Despite the dangers, she frequently visits Ukraine, covering the brutal Russian invasion of her native country.

It is clear Myroslava Gongadze exemplifies unwavering resilience in adversity. Her courage and dedication to truth have inspired generations of journalists, activists, and changemakers. Her Legacy in discourse journalism as more than a profession, but a vocation shaping history's course. Myroslava remains a staunch advocate for freedom of the press, truth, and human rights. Her story offers hope in an era grappling with misinformation, censorship, and democratic erosion. She reminds us to embrace the principles she so ardently defends for a just and enlightened society. On behalf of the Case Western Reserve University community, tonight I am

proud to honor Myroslava Gongadze with the 2023 Inamori Ethics Prize for her outstanding global ethical leadership. And now I would like to invite you to watch a short video on our honoree.

[Video Plays]: I was born in a very beautiful, picture-perfect, western Ukrainian town, Berezhany. We had one huge room for five of us, and we didn't have running water.

Myroslava Gongadze grew up in communist Ukraine, but at home she vividly remembers her father watching Voice of America broadcasts.

At school, we didn't learn Ukrainian history. I always questioned. It was like a destiny for me to do what I do.

She ultimately pursued a degree in civic law. In the late 1990s, she met Georgiy Gongadze, who would become her husband.

He was so inspiring. He wanted to do journalism.

Frustrated by established media, Georgiy co-founded the news website Ukrainian Truth. They were exposing the Ukrainian government for corruption, for connection to Russia. On September 16th, 2000, Georgiy didn't come home. Six weeks later, his body, beheaded and burned, was discovered forty miles away.

You feel lost, frustrated, angry, sad. Seeking the justice kept me going.

Later that fall, recordings surfaced that appeared to implicate Ukraine's president in Georgiy's death. The revelations sparked months of sustained protests.

It became, in a way, even a catalyst for the Orange Revolution in 2004, where Ukraine started truly to separate from Russia's influence. In a way, Myroslava's heroism led to the separation of Ukraine from Russia.

Myroslava and her two children received political asylum in the US in 2001. She became a correspondent at Radio Free Europe in Washington DC, and in 2004, the Eastern Europe Chief for Voice of America.

It's an incredibly difficult task to learn the language, and to take care of the children, and become the voice to the world. It's heroism in itself.

I see myself and my job to give people facts. To help them to make those educated decisions. That's my passion.

Today, the Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence at Case Western Reserve University is proud to present the 2023 Inamori Ethics Prize to Myroslava Gongadze.

WARD: Myroslava Gongadze, we wish to recognize your profound ethical leadership as a journalist and a free press and anti-corruption advocate. Your

efforts have served to improve the condition of humankind in a significant and lasting way. Thus, on the recommendation of the Inamori Ethics Prize selection committee, it is my great honor and pleasure to present you the 2023 Inamori Ethics Prize medal.

GONGADZE: This is very emotional, and thank you. Good afternoon, dear colleagues, professors, students, dear friends. This is a huge honor and responsibility to receive this prestigious award. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for this incredible recognition. It's like a mid-career, midlife stamp of approval for me. It tells me, Myroslava, you did something right, keep going.

I have been to your town many times, but never quite like this. Cleveland is famous for at least three things close to my heart. One of the strongest and most devoted Ukrainian community in the United States, with many members whom I know and admire personally. Some of them are here with us today. Thank you. The Cleveland Ukrainian Museum that holds VoA Ukrainian service recording archives. And the biggest supporter of Ukraine in the United States Congress, the co-chair of the Ukraine caucus and my role model, congresswoman Marcy Kaptur. She's in DC, President Zelensky is there. She was not able to come here today. Now this award linked me to this town and this community forever. It will be home away from home for me.

Unfortunately, Mr. Inamori is not with us anymore, but his spirit and his philosophy are very alive. He taught us to take any challenge with courage and do what is right. This has very much been my life philosophy. Act with courage, not with fear, be fair, and serve others for the greater good. This deep belief guided me, guided my life over the years. From the time I was growing up in the Soviet Union, it was my decision to study law and become a journalist. Later in my relentless pursuit of justice and truth in my husband's murder, and now, when I am covering the Russian war in Ukraine, to tell the world the story of the tragedy, courage, and perseverance of the Ukrainian people and their fight for the right to life and self-determination.

Last year at this time, I was standing in a different spot, in another part of the world. I was in the middle of a horrendous scene at the mass grave near the small eastern Ukrainian town Izyum. I was witnessing the uncovering of bodies of Ukrainians killed by Russian forces. Retreating in the face of the Ukrainian counteroffensive, they left behind chilling signs of the horror Ukrainians suffered during almost six months of occupation. Locals told me stories of people who went missing and were tortured. Some people, including children, were killed just for speaking Ukrainian or wearing

Ukrainian symbols. The pine tree forest where I was standing held evidence of Russian war crimes. Russia is committing genocide in Ukraine. I had to be there to witness and to tell the story to the world. Now many of us know the names of Ukrainian towns, Bucha, Irpin, Mariupol. According to the last reports from the beginning of the large-scale armed attack by Russia, thirteen million people have been displaced, nearly ten thousand civilians were killed, and seventeen thousand were injured in Ukraine. Scenes caused with bulletholes, bodies with hands tied behind their back, mutilated with visible signs of torture, the smell of death and despair in that forest brought traumatic memories and made me finally realize that what the Ukrainian nation went through for hundreds of years of occupation under the Russian Soviet Kremlin regime.

When I was growing up in the Soviet Union, I didn't understand any of this. My small picture-perfect town as you saw, Berezhany, held a lot of dark history of the twentieth century. But in 1972, the year I was born, it was all hidden, and my neighbors were preparing to step into the common square. The May Day parade, the November revolution celebrations were the main public events. We kids love to sit on the big balcony in our historic house and face the main town square and watch parades with marching bands, dressed-up people carrying red flags and posters with faces of Brezhnev, Lenin, and Stalin, and banners with "Communism will come to reality soon" written on them. In school, I learned about Stalin's successful industrial policy, the great patriotic war, and poor people in America suffering from capitalism. I did not learn anything about my heritage or the history of Ukraine. The use of words like *independent Ukraine*, *blue and yellow national flag*, or *God* was a punishable offense. At home, though, hanging on the wall next to my parent's wedding day picture, we had an icon of Jesus and saints with traditional Ukrainian embroidery towels over them. My father, the head engineer at the radio factory, made us kids pray before meals. After school, doing my homework was not a priority. My job as the oldest child was to stand in multiple lines in different grocery stores to buy milk, bread, fish. Getting food on the table was a constant struggle for our family with three kids, and we were not different from any other family.

After supper, my father would reach to the radio he made for himself, sitting quietly on his side of the bed. He would search for foreign radio stations jammed by the government. He needed to know what was really happening in the world. We would go to bed with that cracking sound of some strange announcement. "This is Voice of America, from Washington."

When I was really young, my father would hold my hands tight while walking home and recite Ukrainian poetry to me. He knew, by heart, a lot of poems by the iconic Ukrainian poet Shevchenko. When I was three or four, before I even knew how to read, I loved to stand in front of any audience. I would recite Ukrainian poetry I learned from my father—people would clap and cheer, and I would feel so proud and so happy. I would do it again and again until somebody would tell me to stop. Yes, we, like many Soviet families, lived a double life. I grew up with the realization that not everything that is written in the paper or said on TV is true. From a young age, I learned that you cannot repeat anything your parents say at the dinner table or tell anyone what you heard on that foreign radio station that your father listened to under the cover of the night. I was crushed.

What is truth? The things that they tell you in school or what your parents are teaching you? So all my adolescence, I was on the journey to learn about my own history. I have learned about the short period of Ukraine's independence in 1918, recognized by Europeans after World War I but crushed by the Soviet regime a few years later. I have learned about Stalin's policy to crush Ukrainians' identity and the man-made famine, Holodomor, which, in the early 1930s, by different estimates, took lives of more than seven million Ukrainians. I learned about the Ukrainian resistance movement after World War II. I learned about the gulag and the Ukrainian leadership murdered by the Stalin regime and later, the Ukrainian dissident movement in the sixties and seventies, sent to camps in Siberia. My world, as I knew it, crashed on me.

At the age of seventeen, I was fed up with constant lies. I needed to know, and be able to tell, the truth. I had too many questions, and this was the time to decide what I wanted to do in life. I wanted to learn more about history and see the world with my own eyes, and I wanted to become a historian or journalist. My parents were terrified. In the environment we were living, telling the truth could mean a death sentence. So my mom suggested, "How about going to law school?" This was a solid recommendation, and the only way I thought I could uphold the truth was to become a lawyer, and the only university I will go to will be Lviv National University. Much later, I learned that Hersch Lauterpacht, the author and lawyer whose work became the basis for the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, went to the same law school in the early 1930s. Lviv National University was the alma mater for Raphael Lemkin, creator of the term *genocide* and the key prosecutor in the Nuremberg Trials. So, in

1991, I moved to the western capital of Ukraine, Lviv, the multicultural center of the Ukrainian national uprising. That same year, the Soviet Union collapsed. Ukraine declared independence, and I celebrated my twenty-first birthday by dancing to George Michael with my future husband at a big party he threw for me. It was an exciting time, the beginning of my adult life and the beginning of the independence of my country—a special time for both of us. I was studying law, but curiosity and the constant search for a better understanding of life around me brought me to journalism. It was the same for a young student in the English language department, Georgiy Gongadze, who wanted to tell the story of his native country torn by war, Georgia. We started working together. Soon, we were both employed by the newly established Lviv independent newspaper Post-Postup. We were building a new democracy and establishing an independent media that did not exist in Ukraine. We saw a bright future ahead of us. In these initial years of Ukraine's independence, we were free to cover any story.

I was interested in international news, I wanted to travel the world to tell stories in pictures, to work on TV. I remember the moment when, in the early nineties, I saw on my small television set at home: the Voice of America's first Ukrainian language show, *Window on America*, and I said to myself, "I would like to anchor on that show one day." Georgiy had some experience with cameras. His father was a Georgian filmmaker, dissident, turned politician and a member of the first independent Georgian parliament. So, we decided we would make television, and we did. We got married, won a grant from the US Embassy, and went to the US to make a documentary about the American police, which we called later *Dream Defenders*. Coming back home, we created a small production company and started to produce TV—weekly news and analysis magazines for the local TV station. That work later led us to move to Kyiv, where we started working at the newly established TV production house. I was interested in covering international affairs, and my first international assignment was in Belgrade to cover the war-racked country of Serbia. I walked the streets of Belgrade and observed the distressed citizens of that which once was one of the richest countries of the former Eastern Bloc. We went to the presidential palace for a meeting with Milošević—I looked at his gloomy, unsmiling face trying to understand what was driving this man to start a genocide. It was 1996, just a few months after he was forced to sign the Dayton Agreement and freeze the military operation in Bosnia. After landing home, I went straight to work to put together my report. When

my editor read it for the first time, he looked at me and said three words: “It’s a piece of shit.” “I want to smell the coffee and food in the restaurants on the street of Belgrade, I need to feel the desperation of people, I want to look at Milošević’s eyes with you,” he told me. “Go make it happen. The deadline for production is in an hour, and if you fail, the story is not going on air.” The next day, my first story from the trip to Serbia was on air, and my small-town neighbors called my parents to ask if that was that me on TV on Saturday night.

While I ventured to do international news, Georgiy was deeply involved with covering internal politics and growing corruption. He produced and anchored a weekly TV show about current affairs. At one of the shows, he told the story about the so-called Kuchma clan, the ring of oligarchs around the president. The presidential administration noticed, Georgiy was warned by the management of the company. Afraid of the backlash from the power holders, they started to censor his show. We started getting “recommendations” from the management—what story to cover and what to stay away from. We felt that the times were changing, and the window of freedom was closing on us. The president and his circle took a tighter grip on the media. Journalists who would ask uncomfortable questions would lose their jobs. One would “commit suicide,” and another would die from a “television explosion in his apartment.” All of these would be called accidents, and none of them would be investigated. We were expecting our children when Georgiy told me he had to quit the job, but he could not stop digging for truth—investigating illegal foreign bank accounts of the top country officials close to the president, election fraud, infiltration of Russian agents, and corrupt deals. We know now that feeding corruption and strengthening oligarchs in Ukraine to keep the country’s dependency on Russian money and energy was Russia’s strategy for keeping Ukraine in its sphere.

In 2000, the circumstances were dire for free journalism in Ukraine, so my husband decided to create his own newspaper, one in which he could publish anything he wanted, and it would be an internet publication with no printing cost. Creating an internet news website, which he would call *Ukrainska Pravda*—Ukrainian Truth—would become the only way he and some other brave reporters could do their job. At the time, not even 1 percent of the country’s population had internet access. He thought this was the only way to stay independent, and relevant, and to speak to the world. What he didn’t foresee was how seriously the people in power would take this as a

threat and what kind of danger he was putting himself in. The site went up in April of 2000, but after publishing a few stories in May, strange things started to happen. One day fire inspectors came to the website office to make sure “everything was up to code.” The next day, electricity would go down, and it was impossible to figure out the reason. We stopped discussing important stuff on the phone. It didn’t help. After months of being under surveillance, on September 16, twenty-three years ago, my husband simply did not come home. Two months later, in the local morgue, I saw what was left of him. My husband’s once perfectly built body of a runner with a handsome face and a big smile was discovered in a forest near the country’s capital, Kyiv. He was killed by the government police because the president wanted to silence him.

In the days after his disappearance, I was left in total shock and despair. I had two young kids on my hands. I was afraid to go home, that I knew was under surveillance, and I was warned not to talk on the phone. I felt lost, confused, helpless, and angry. And then, I had to make a decision. To keep quiet and accept the loss or speak up and fight for justice by simply putting my life at risk. I chose the second. Part of me was forever gone, but, at the same time, I found a new me—stronger, more outspoken, and assertive. I got the strength to go public. In those first days, hoping he would be captured somewhere and the public outcry would save his life, I used my legal knowledge to demand an investigation and challenge in court. I reached out to friends and coworkers in the media, asking them to tell the story, friends in civil society to organize events, and some public figures I knew to speak out for the case. People would tell me that I had zero chance to find out what happened to Georgiy or get any justice, but I promised myself to do everything in my control to push the investigation forward. I promised myself, and the public, that this crime would not go unpunished. It had an effect. The Ukrainian public was moved, and the story about Georgiy started dominating the news cycle in Ukraine and started to be picked up by foreign media. I would give countless interviews. I made friends with Jill Dougherty from CNN and Michelle Kelemen from NPR, but after months of fruitless struggle, I was forced to leave. The US took me and my kids in as refugees. I arrived in the United States with no money, two suitcases, and no English. I was determined to keep working as a reporter because I saw it as my mission. I got a job first at Radio Liberty, later joined the Voice of America, and became a TV anchor and head of the Ukrainian service so I could carry out the mission, and I have never given up trying to fight for justice.

My pursuit of justice and truth prompted me to raise my voice against violence towards journalists, shape my commitment to the protection of

journalists, and cemented my desire to see Ukraine as an independent, just, and strong society. While I was successful in some of my pursuits, I failed at others. I was able to get partial justice. All of the perpetrators of the crime served prison time, and the general who organized the kidnapping and murder was sent to life in prison. It took me over twenty years to see the final verdict in this case. My determination inspired people to find their own voices in pursuit of a more just society and paved the way for two subsequent revolutions in Ukraine. During the Orange Revolution in 2004, Ukrainians demonstrated to the world their desire for freedom, justice, and democracy. They brought new leadership to power, but it failed to deliver most of the promises given to people on Maidan. Disillusioned and discouraged, Ukrainians again elected pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich. A few years later, when they discovered his true colors, they ousted the president in 2014 during yet another revolution, the Revolution of Dignity. This time, the government used force against peaceful demonstrators. During the winter of 2013–14, more than a hundred people died during street fights in the center of Kyiv.

After the president fled the country to Russia, Ukraine was invaded. Seeing Ukraine's progress and Ukrainian aspiration toward joining the European Union and NATO in February of 2022, the Kremlin decided to crush Ukrainian spirit and resilience by waging a full-scale war. By bombarding schools and cultural institutions, kidnapping Ukrainian kids, and destroying civilian infrastructure, Russians are trying to kill Ukrainian identity as they have done so many times in history. I can't simply watch it from afar. I made a decision again to go back to tell the story of Ukrainians' final battle for independence, truth, and justice. I'm proud of my fellow reporters who are risking their lives in Ukraine to show you the face of Russian aggression and the courage and determination of Ukrainians. Sadly, at least seventeen of my colleagues died while doing their job covering the Russian War in Ukraine. One of the first casualties of the war was my fellow classmate from the Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University, Brent Renaud. He was shot while filming the evacuation from Irpin at the beginning of the war.

It is difficult to cover the war, especially when you have to witness the suffering of your own countrymen. You have to stay objective, put your emotions aside, and be vigilant about your biases. Remembering the principle of ethical journalism, I learned at the beginning of my life in the United States when I came to work at RFE helps. It says, "We do not regard balance as meaning neutrality regarding the truth." When one side in a debate misrepresents the facts, ethical journalism requires pointing out falsehood and stating what is factually correct. In Ukraine, Russia did not merely attack

Ukraine. It attacked the West and the values it represents: freedom, truth, morality, and human dignity. Today, democracy, the best-invented form of governance, is under attack, and it is at risk without critical thinking and fact-based decision-making—which is impossible without responsible media, reporters, and free speech. Those reporters who are going after the story, pointing out what is right, and searching for the truth are the heroes of our time. By protecting and supporting reporters, we as a society are protecting our freedom. By defending democracies under attack, like Ukraine, we are defending our democracy. The future of democracy is in our hands, in your hands, as future leaders and decision-makers. To make this world more just, you have to make your decisions based on facts, knowledge, the inclusion of different opinions, and always search for the truth. Timothy Snyder wrote one of my favorite books, *The Road to Unfreedom*, wrote “Final truth in this world is unattainable, but its pursuit leads the individual away from unfreedom. We all need to do a better job of pursuing the best attainable truth possible, and I see my, and my colleagues’, job as a constant pursuit of that sometimes-unattainable truth in service of others. Thank you.

WARD: Thank you so much for that amazing speech. We are honored to have you join us on our campus as we recognize your profound ethical leadership. Your essential work, not only in journalism, but also your advocacy for human rights inspires us and reminds us of the vital role a free press plays in preserving freedom globally. Please join me in heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Gongadze. Thank you all for attending tonight’s celebration. We hope you can join us tomorrow for a stimulating discussion of Ms. Gongadze’s work during the academic symposium, which occurs at 1:30 p.m. in the ballroom of the Thwing [Student Center] on the Case Western Reserve campus, where she will be joined by distinguished panelists Dan Moulthrop and Raymond Ku. This concludes the 2023 Inamori Ethics Prize Ceremony, have a wonderful evening, and thank you so very much for joining us this evening for this amazing, amazing speech and witness of understanding for the role one can play in changing the world. Thank you.