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News Release

FOR RELEASE Feb. 16, 2014
Brooklyn N.Y.

Embargoed for release at 10 p.m. FEB 16, 2014

LIU ANNOUNCES 2013 GEORGE POLK AWARDS IN JOURNALISM

Winners include four reporters who broke the story on secret NSA surveillance.

Brooklyn, N.Y. - Four reporters who revealed the extent of secret surveillance and massive data collected by the National Security Agency are winners of the 65th annual George Polk Awards in Journalism announced today by Long Island University. The four—from Guardian US, the US-based website of the Guardian newspaper, and The Washington Post—were among 30 recipients from 15 news organizations who were recognized in 13 categories for work in 2013.

Reporting by those honored also triggered probes of statehouse corruption in Virginia and political payback in New Jersey, explored the gap between rich and poor in urban and rural locales, produced telling accounts of mass death in Bangladesh and civilian killings by U.S. forces in Afghanistan, exposed dark sides of pro football and major league baseball and examined community responses to mental illness that ranged from ineffective to absurd.

Columnist, author and editor Pete Hamill, a New York institution for nearly half a century, was honored with the George Polk Career Award, which is named in memory of Professor Robert D. Spector, chair of the George Polk Awards for 32 years until his death in 2009. Hamill joins such prior career honorees as James Reston of The New York Times, Fred Friendly of CBS and Bill Moyers of PBS.

“In the tradition of George Polk, many of the journalists we have recognized did more than report news,” said John Darnton, curator of the awards. “They heightened public awareness with perceptive detection and dogged pursuit of stories that otherwise would not have seen the light of day. Repercussions of the NSA stories in particular will be with us for years to come.”

The George Polk Awards in Journalism are conferred annually to honor special achievement in journalism. The awards, which place a premium on investigative and enterprise reporting that gains attention and achieves results, were established in 1949 by LIU to commemorate George Polk, a CBS correspondent murdered in 1948 while covering the Greek civil war.

The 2013 George Polk Awards will be presented at a luncheon at The Roosevelt Hotel in Manhattan Friday, April 11. Associated Press correspondent **Kimberly Dozier** will be the citation reader at the event. Three award recipients — Andrea Elliot of the New York Times, Eli Saslow of the Washington Post and Alison Fitzgerald of the Center for Public Integrity — will discuss their

reporting with Darnton in the David J. Steinberg Seminar, “Covering Inequality in America,” the preceding evening, Thursday, April 10. The seminar, at LIU Brooklyn’s Kumble Theater for Performing Arts, is free and open to the public.

These are the George Polk laureates for 2013:

Glenn Greenwald, Ewen MacAskill and Laura Poitras of The Guardian, and Barton Gellman of The Washington Post will receive the **George Polk Award for National Security Reporting** for investigative stories based on top-secret documents disclosed by former intelligence analyst Edward Snowden. The reporters conferred with Snowden to negotiate release of the material and then used their extensive backgrounds covering national security to explore the purloined files and reveal their stunning import, describing how the NSA gathered information on untold millions of unsuspecting — and unsuspected — Americans, plugged into the communications links of major Internet companies and coerced companies like Yahoo and Google into turning over data about their customers.

[The Guardian: “NSA collecting phone records of millions of Verizon customers daily”](#)

[The Guardian: Timeline of articles](#)

[The Washington Post: “U.S., British intelligence mining data from nine U.S. Internet companies in broad secret program”](#)

James Yardley of The New York Times will receive the **George Polk Award for Foreign Reporting** for coverage of the disastrous Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh, which dwarfed the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in its immensity, claiming the lives of more than 1,100 clothing workers. Barred from Bangladesh after his prior reporting on deplorable factory conditions there, Yardley found his way to the scene from India. After initially depicting the depth and scope of the tragedy for its victims and their families in highly personal terms, his stories documented oppressive conditions that continue to exploit workers at the hands of politically connected Bangladeshi manufacturers supplying a global network of brand-name distributors and giant retailers.

[The New York Times: “Horrific Fire Revealed a Gap in Safety for Global Brands”](#)

The **George Polk Award for National Reporting** will go to **Eli Saslow of The Washington Post** for six stories delving into the lives of some of the 47 million Americans who receive aid from the \$78 billion federal food stamp program, which has tripled in the past decade. Reporting on a corner of Rhode Island where one in three families qualifies for aid, desperate seniors who must be convinced to swallow their pride to apply for aid, a rural Tennessee town where children go hungry when school is out, a Congressman who wants to require recipients to work for food stamps, a Texas county where processed food is so prevalent obesity and diabetes are double the national average and a mother of six in Washington, D.C., facing the largest cuts to the program in 50 years, Saslow has painted an indelible portrait of American poverty.

[The Washington Post: “Waiting for the 8th”](#)

Shawn Boburg, who covers the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for **The Record of Northern New Jersey**, will be recognized in the **State Reporting** category for articles on lane closures on the George Washington Bridge in September that created a monumental traffic jam in Fort Lee, New Jersey. Boburg, who has written extensively about patronage and cronyism at the Authority for three years, wrote as early as December that the closings may be traceable to powers outside the agency, setting the stage for subsequent stories on the involvement of Governor Chris Christie’s office, which made national headlines.

[The Record: "Agency Still Silent on tie-up at GWB"](#)

(if link does not work:

http://dng.northjersey.com/media_server/tr/2014/2014ire/pSeptember19a-8PDFView.pdf)

Andrea Elliott of **The New York Times** will receive the **George Polk Award for Local Reporting** for "**Invisible Child**," her riveting five-part series focusing on one of 22,000 homeless children in New York City. After encountering an engaging 11-year-old girl, Dasani Coates, outside a Brooklyn homeless shelter, Elliott spent 15 months virtually living with Dasani and her family to produce an unsparing inside-out account of the realities of urban poverty that has echoes of Charles Dickens.

[The New York Times: "Invisible Child"](#)

The **George Polk Award for Political Reporting** will go to **Rosalind Helderman, Laura Vozzella** and **Carol Leonnig** of **The Washington Post** for revealing the relationship between Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell and a wealthy entrepreneur. Starting with a tip to Helderman, reporters uncovered \$145,000 in gifts and a \$120,000 loan to McDonnell and his wife Maureen apparently in exchange for promoting a food supplement. Their stories became a major topic in the election of McDonnell's successor, led to calls for tighter financial disclosure laws in Virginia and spurred a federal investigation that resulted in a 14-count indictment of the McDonnells.

[The Washington Post: "McDonnell apologizes, repays loans"](#)

Two entries examining aspects of the crisis in treating the mentally ill will share the **George Polk Award for Medical Reporting**. **Meg Kissinger** of the **Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel** will be honored for a series of stories on the Milwaukee County mental health system so revelatory, analytical and conclusive that they amount to a definitive study of a system that barely functions, and **Cynthia Hubert** and **Phillip Reese** of the **Sacramento Bee** will be cited for turning one man's account into a shocking exposé of a Las Vegas psychiatric hospital's practice of exporting patients — 1,500 over five years — to locales across the country via Greyhound bus.

[Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel: "Let's confront mental health crisis and save lives"](#)

[Sacramento Bee: "L.A. poised to go after Las Vegas hospital in patient-dumping cases"](#)

The New York Times reporters **Frances Robles, Sharon Otterman, Michael Powell** and **N. R. Kleinfield** will receive the **George Polk Award for Justice Reporting** for uncovering evidence that a Brooklyn homicide detective used false confessions, tainted testimony and coercive tactics to convict dozens of defendants. After a story by Otterman and Powell based on a tip she received that the man convicted in a rabbi's murder was framed, Robles discovered that the lead detective in that case used the same "witness" in half a dozen unrelated murders and put similar phraseology in the mouths of a number of suspects he swore had confessed. After her stories were published, two men were exonerated and released from prison and Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes, whose office prosecuted all of the dubious cases, lost a bid for re-election. More than 50 additional convictions are under review.

[The New York Times: "Jailed Unjustly in the Death of a Rabbi, Man Nears Freedom"](#)

Tim Elfrink of the **Miami New Times** will receive the **George Polk Award for Sports Reporting** for revealing that Biogenesis, an anti-aging clinic in Coral Gables, supplied some of baseball's biggest stars with performance-enhancing drugs. Elfrink deciphered and traced records from a

disgruntled investor to customers like “Cacique” and “El Mostro” (code names for sluggers Alex Rodriguez and Melky Cabrera) in a three-month investigation. His explosive stories led to the suspension of 13 players, created a sea change in how baseball owners and players approach drug use and explained how Florida Governor Rick Scott’s laissez-faire approach to regulation allowed clinics like Biogenesis to operate with little or no oversight.

Miami New Times: [“Tony Bosch and Biogenesis: MLB Steroid Scandal”](#)

The **George Polk Award for Business Reporting** will go to **Alison Fitzgerald, Daniel Wagner, Lauren Kyger** and **John Dunbar** of **The Center for Public Integrity** for “After the Meltdown,” a three-part series demonstrating that regulators and prosecutors have failed to hold a single major player on Wall Street accountable for the reckless behavior that sparked the 2008 financial crisis, allowing them to live lavishly in its aftermath and permitting some to resume the sort of investment activity that plunged the nation into a deep and debilitating recession.

The Center for Public Integrity: [“After the Meltdown”](#)

Matthieu Aikins, a freelance journalist who has reported from Afghanistan for five years, will receive the **George Polk Award for Magazine Reporting** for “The A-Team Killings” published in the November 21 issue of Rolling Stone. In the course of five months of dogged reporting from one of the country’s most dangerous areas, Akins developed convincing evidence that a 12-man U.S. Army Special Forces unit and their Afghani translators rounded up and executed 10 civilians in the Nerkh district of Wardak province, where allegations of extrajudicial killings had emerged in early 2013. The army, which initially denied the charges, opened a criminal inquiry after Aikins’ story was published, and human rights organizations called for thorough and impartial investigations.

Rolling Stone: [“The A-Team Killings”](#)

The **George Polk Award for Network Television Reporting** will go to **Michael Kirk, Jim Gilmore, Mike Wiser, Steve Fainaru** and **Mark Fainaru-Wada** for “League of Denial,” a “Frontline” documentary aired on PBS that traced the National Football League’s longstanding efforts to quash evidence linking head injuries suffered by players to an inordinately high level of the brain disease chronic traumatic encephalopathy. The program detailed how physicians on the NFL payroll dismissed independent medical research and demeaned the researchers in a concerted effort to hide the truth.

PBS: [“League of Denial”](#)

Noah Pransky of **WTSP**, a CBS affiliate in the Tampa Bay area, will receive the **George Polk Award for Local Television Reporting** for discovering and disclosing how state and local officials and a contractor bilked Floridian drivers out of millions of dollars in fines by reducing the period of time before yellow caution lights turn to red at intersections monitored by cameras. Pransky noticed a fast yellow at the scene of an accident and pursued the story with more than 40 reports that sent officials into reverse, lengthening yellows and vowing to legislate the practice out of existence.

Brooklyn-born **Pete Hamill**, winner of the **George Polk Career Award**, joined the New York Post in 1960 and later wrote for the New York Herald Tribune, the Post again, the Daily News, the Village Voice and New York Newsday as well as the Saturday Evening Post, New York Magazine, the New Yorker, Esquire, Playboy and Rolling Stone. He served as editor of the Post and editor-in-chief of the News. He earned early acclaim for unflinching coverage of America’s urban riots in the 1960s, wars in Vietnam, Northern Ireland, Lebanon and Nicaragua, and the ups and

downs of everyday New Yorkers. Hamill edited a two-volume collection of the work of A.J. Liebling and his extended essay, "News Is a Verb: Journalism at the End of the 20th Century," was published in 1998. "A Drinking Life," a 1994 memoir detailing his belated route to sobriety and all that came before, received wide critical acclaim. Hamill, who has also written passionately and extensively about art, photography and boxing, has lived in Barcelona, Dublin, Mexico City, San Juan, Rome, Los Angeles and Santa Fe but always returned to New York where he lives with his wife, the writer Fukiko Aoki. He will be 79 in June.

About Long Island University (LIU):

In its ninth decade of providing excellence in higher education, LIU is a multi-campus, diverse, doctoral institution of higher learning. One of the largest and most comprehensive private universities in the country, LIU has more than 500 undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degree programs and certificates at locations and programs spanning the New York metropolitan area, overseas and online. The university educates more than 23,000 students in degree-credit and continuing education programs and has nearly 200,000 alumni worldwide.

During 2013, LIU earned a spot on the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, while also ranking among the Colleges with the Highest Return on Investment in New York and being named among the Best 295 Business Schools for the 11th consecutive year. LIU also offers the oldest school of professional accountancy in the nation as part of its AACSB-accredited College of Management. The university's College of Pharmacy dates back to 1886 and now is one of the largest private colleges of pharmacy in the country. In addition to academic excellence, LIU hosts NCAA Division I and II athletics, is home to the internationally acclaimed Tilles Center for the Performing Arts, and bestows the renowned George Polk Awards in Journalism.

LIU Brooklyn

Located in downtown Brooklyn, N.Y., LIU Brooklyn offers nearly 160 associate, undergraduate, graduate, doctoral and certificate programs in one of New York City's most diverse and thriving urban communities. In addition to world-class faculty, a vibrant campus life and residence halls for more than 1,100 students, the campus is home to the \$45-million Steinberg Wellness Center, which features an NCAA-regulation swimming pool, a 2,500-seat arena, state-of-the-art workout facilities and a rooftop track for students, faculty, staff, alumni and the local community. Graduates who earn their degrees from LIU Brooklyn have achieved great distinction in the fields of art and media, natural sciences, business, social policy, education, health care and pharmacy science.

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