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UGA Grady College honors former Current TV reporters with McGill Medal for Journalistic Courage

Athens, Ga. – Two reporters taken captive by North Korea during a reporting trip on human trafficking will be honored by the University of Georgia for journalistic courage. Laura Ling and Euna Lee will receive the McGill Medal for Journalistic Courage on April 20, in the Grady College for Journalism and Mass Communication.

“These women showed extreme courage and tenacity,” wrote Florida A&M University journalism professor Valerie D. White in one nomination. “They were the epitome of grace and courage and an inspiration for journalists around the world,” wrote *Cleveland Plain Dealer* reporter Janet H. Cho in another.

Ling and Lee had traveled to China to document the trafficking of North Korean women in China for Current TV. On March 17, 2009, they were detained by North Korean soldiers along the border with China. They were held captive in North Korea for 140 days before being granted a special pardon and returned to the United States.

Ling and Lee were selected from journalists nominated by reporters, editors and academicians from across the U.S. Nominees were to be “working U.S. journalists whose career has exemplified journalistic courage.”

The selection was made by the 2010 class of McGill Fellows, 12 undergraduate and graduate students chosen for academic achievement, practical experience and leadership.

“As soon as they were in custody, the women’s first priority was protecting their sources,” wrote Omar Lewis, the McGill Fellow who researched the nomination. “They ate notes and destroyed videotape as soon as they were able. During daily interrogations, they revealed no names. “

The McGill Medal is named for Ralph McGill, the late editor and publisher of the *Atlanta Constitution*. McGill was regarded by many as “the conscience of the South” for his editorials challenging racial segregation in the 1950s and 1960s.

“Ralph McGill was a voice for the voiceless and a true exemplar of journalistic courage,” Ling said in a statement. “I am honored and humbled to be receiving a medal named after one of journalism’s greats.”

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Today, Ling is the host and reporter on “E! Investigates,” a documentary series on the E! Network, which explores topics such as teen suicide and the challenges faced by military spouses.

Besides her work for Current TV’s *Vanguard* series that took her to China for the story on human trafficking, Ling has worked as a series producer for Channel One News where she produced reports from around the globe. Ling co-created *Breaking it Down*, a documentary series on MTV that aired between 1999 and 2001. Her work also has appeared on ABC’s *Nightline*, NBC, PBS, and the WB.

Ling is co-author of *Somewhere Inside: One Sister’s Captivity in North Korea and the Other’s Fight to Bring Her Home* that she wrote with sister, Lisa. Lee’s book about the North Korea imprisonment, *The World is Bigger Now*, was published late last year.

“It’s always inspiring to be recognized by my fellow journalists,” said Lee in a statement. “I am truly excited and honored to receive the Ralph McGill award. It’s my privilege to be a part it.”

Lee was born and raised in South Korea, and moved to the U.S. in order to attend film school. She joined Current TV in San Francisco in 2005, and later moved to Los Angeles with her husband, actor Michael Saldate, and daughter, Hana.

The reporting trip to China with Ling was Lee’s first overseas assignment.

The McGill Medal is the latest development in the growth of the McGill program at UGA’s Grady College. For 31 years, the McGill Lecture has brought significant figures in journalism to UGA to help the university honor McGill’s courage as an editor. In 2007, UGA added the McGill Symposium, bringing together students, faculty and leading journalists to consider what journalistic courage means and how it is exemplified by reporters and editors. And, in 2009, the first McGill Medal was awarded to a U.S. journalist whose career exemplified journalistic courage.

“All of this is for a single purpose: to advance journalistic courage,” said John F. Greenman, Carter Professor of Journalism. Greenman and Diane H. Murray, the Grady College’s director of public service and outreach, oversee the McGill program.

The McGill Medal is funded by the McGill Lecture Endowment. Contributors include the Gannett Foundation.

For more information about the McGill program, contact Greenman at 706/542-1081, jgreenma@uga.edu or Murray at 706/542-5038, murrayd@uga.edu, or see www.grady.uga.edu/mcgill.

Established in 1915, the UGA Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication offers undergraduate majors in advertising, digital and broadcast journalism, magazines, newspapers, public relations, publication management and mass media arts. The college offers two graduate degrees, and is home to the Knight Chair in Health and Medical Journalism and the Peabody Awards, internationally recognized as one of the most prestigious prizes for excellence in electronic media. For more information, see www.grady.uga.edu or follow @UGAGrady on Twitter.