



Public Affairs
News Service
News Release

Monday, March 5, 2012

Writer: **Sherrie R. Whaley**, 706/583-8220, swhaley@uga.edu

Contact: **John Greenman**, 706/542-1081, jgreenma@uga.edu

Associated Press reporter to receive UGA McGill Medal for Journalistic Courage

Athens, Ga. – A wire service journalist who documented mass killings, exposed child trafficking and illuminated the struggles from earthquakes and hurricanes is the recipient of this year’s McGill Medal for Journalistic Courage.

Rukmini Callimachi, West Africa bureau chief for the Associated Press, will receive the medal from the University of Georgia Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication and its McGill Program in Journalistic Courage during an April ceremony.

“Rukmini Callimachi has brought immense courage to covering her beat in West Africa,” wrote AP editor Mary Rajkumar in her nomination. “Rukmini found proof of mass killings in the Ivory Coast by braving government minders to try to get into the morgues. She reported from a hotel where she was trapped during the conflict, positioning her satellite phone out the window despite the gunfire whizzing by. She followed a trail of corpses that led to evidence of another massacre, at the risk of coming across the killers.”

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.

“I am honored—and humbled—to have received this year’s medal, named after a journalist that stood alone among his colleagues in the 1950s and courageously denounced segregation in our country’s South,” said Callimachi.

The selection was made by the 2011 class of McGill Fellows, 12 undergraduate and graduate students chosen for academic achievement, practical experience and leadership.

The McGill Fellows were impressed that “Callimachi frequently sacrificed her safety for her stories operating on the principle that tragedies and disasters are important because of the people they affect,” said Satyam Kaswala, the McGill Fellow who researched the nomination.

Honors for journalistic courage are nothing new for Callimachi. She received the 2011 Eugene S. Pulliam Journalism Writing Award for an article on the collapse of Haiti’s

MORE

Hotel Montana and the earthquake victims found there. She was a finalist for the 2010 Batten Medal for her "...compassion, courage, humanity and deep concern for the underdog" and a finalist for the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for an "...in-depth investigation of the exploitation of impoverished children in West and Central Africa who are often traded like animals by adults who prize their labor."

Born in Romania and raised in Switzerland and the U.S., Callimachi is a graduate of Dartmouth College and holds a master's degree in linguistics from Oxford University's Exeter College. She joined the Associated Press in 2003.

The McGill Medal, now in its fourth year, 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 reporters and editors exemplify it. In 2009, the first McGill Medal was awarded to a U.S. journalist whose career has exemplified journalistic courage. Jerry Mitchell, an investigative reporter for *The Clarion-Ledger* in Jackson, Miss., endured death threats for bringing civil rights-era killers to justice.

"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.

For more information on the program, see www.grady.uga.edu/mcgill.

Established in 1915, the UGA Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication offers undergraduate majors in journalism, advertising, public relations, digital and broadcast journalism 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.

##