

Edward Snowden Film 'Citizenfour' Wins Best Documentary Oscar

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Director Laura Poitras (C) accepts the award for best documentary for her film "Citizenfour" at the 2015 Film Independent Spirit Awards in Santa Monica, California on Feb. 21, 2015.

"Citizenfour," a movie about former NSA contractor Edward Snowden's exposure of the U.S. government's mass surveillance programs, has won an Academy Award award for best documentary film.

Directed by Laura Poitras, "Citizenfour" recounts Snowden's exposure of National Security Agency (NSA) surveillance practices and presents live interviews with Snowden in Hong Kong, where he handed classified NSA documents to Poitras and journalist Glenn Greenwald.

Poitras — who shared a Pulitzer Prize for Public Service journalism with The Guardian and The Washington Post for publicizing Snowden's documents — had been working on a film about surveillance when Snowden contacted her in Jan. 2013 using "CITIZENFOUR" as an alias in encrypted e-mails.

"When Laura Poitras asked me if she could film our encounters, I was extremely reluctant,"

Snowden said Sunday in a statement published via the American Civil Liberties Union. "I'm grateful that I allowed her to persuade me. The result is a brave and brilliant film that deserves the honor and recognition it has received.

"My hope is that this award will encourage more people to see the film and be inspired by its message that ordinary citizens, working together, can change the world," he added.

Poitras, editor Mathilde Bonnefoy and producer Dirk Wilutzky accepted the Oscar on Sunday at Hollywood's Dolby Theatre, alongside Greenwald and Lindsay Mills, who is Snowden's girlfriend.

"The subject of 'Citizenfour,' Edward Snowden, could not be here for some treason," joked the ceremony's host Neil Patrick Harris, according to Reuters.

Snowden has been living in exile in Russia since the summer of 2013 to escape the espionage charges he faces in the U.S. Last year, Russian authorities issued Snowden a three-year residency permit.

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