The Washington Post

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January 21, 2014

To the judges:

In 2013, Washington Post photographer Michael Williamson traveled the country to visually document the impact of the food-stamp program under which 47 million Americans receive aid.

In doing so, he managed to tell a broader story of America and the impact of poverty and recession. Accompanying Post reporter Eli Saslow, whose series of articles examined the political, economic and health consequences of food stamps, Williamson traveled from the halls of the Capitol to dusty shantytowns in South Texas; from food pantry lines in South Florida to a bread truck patrolling the hills of rural Tennessee with a sign affixed to its dashboard that said: "Hunger is hidden."

Not anymore.

In a year of remarkable work, Williamson illuminated the dynamic world of hunger in America as nobody else could. His pictures reveal the hardships of poverty, but even more, they reveal the people behind those hardships. Where some might have seen only people waiting in line at a food bank, he saw the lines on those people's faces – the trail left by decades of hardship and stress. Where some would have seen unappealing fast food and rotting vegetables, he saw beauty and Americana. He made us see those things, too.

These were not easy photographs to make. Williamson had to capture people in their most vulnerable moments, but he won their trust with his heart, humor and empathy – and, ultimately, his camera. His images defy stereotypes and expectations; they are as complex and nuanced as the issues that Saslow explored in words. He manages to evoke a universal humanity by giving his subjects something that the world often does not: dignity, respect and a fair viewing.

For his work in showing how Americans lives are touched by food stamps for better and sometimes worse, we are proud to nominate Michael Williamson for the Pulitzer Prize in Feature Photography.

Sincerely,