

Black Caucus of the American Library Association. Inc.

**Press Release
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**BCALA Literary Awards Committee
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Press Room-Colorado Convention Center**

BCALA announces the 2009 Literary Awards Winners

The Black Caucus of the American Library Association, Inc. (BCALA) announces the winners of the 2009 BCALA Literary Awards during the Midwinter Meeting of the American Library Association in Denver, CO. The awards recognize excellence in adult fiction and nonfiction by African American authors published in 2008, including the work of a first novelist, and a citation for Outstanding Contribution to Publishing. The recipients will receive the awards during the 2009 Annual Conference of the American Library Association in Chicago, IL.

The winner in the Fiction category is *Trading Dreams At Midnight* by Diane McKinney-Whetstone (HarperCollins). The two Fiction Honor Book winners are *Seen it All and Done the Rest* by Pearl Cleage (One World/Ballentine) and *Where the Line Bleeds* by Jesmyn Ward (Agate).

Dreams deferred, shattered hopes, unfulfilled fantasies are all interwoven themes in *Trading Dreams At Midnight*. It is a riveting portrayal of family ties that bind and separate throughout three generations of women. The protagonist's search for the mother who disappeared when she and her sister were teenagers and her constant challenge to free herself from the dictates of her grandmother are the undercurrents that impact everything Neena does. She comes full circle when she returns home and is forced to confront the demons that have tormented her throughout life; and she receives help in doing this from a seemingly unlikely source. Diane McKinney-Whetstone teaches at the University of Pennsylvania and lives in Philadelphia.

In *Seen it All and Done the Rest*, Josephine Evans has been a highly celebrated and well-known actress in Europe for the last twenty years. She leaves Amsterdam to return home to Atlanta for a brief visit after the head of her theater company threatens to replace her with a younger actress. She visits her granddaughter, Zora, in Atlanta's West End neighborhood, the scene of several of Cleage's previous novels. In addition to re-evaluating her own life, she helps Zora deal with the aftermath of being publicly humiliated in a local tabloid newspaper after a friend of hers was involved in a scandal. Josephine rekindles old friendships and becomes a community activist to save her family property with the help of her granddaughter. Involvement in something besides their own problems helps both Zora and Josephine resolve their issues and develop a closer bond. Pearl Cleage resides in Atlanta.

Twins Joshua and Christophe mature from boys to men in *Where the Line Bleeds*, a tale of life, love and relationships in the rural Mississippi Gulf Coast. The brothers, abandoned by negligent parents, were nurtured into adulthood by their grandmother. After graduating from high school each goes his separate way as personality, fortune and destiny dictate. Christophe becomes a drug dealer, much to the disapproval of honest, hardworking, Joshua. Complicating the already strained bond between the brothers is the reappearance of their long lost troubled father. Jesmyn Ward, a skillful storyteller, writes a moving and eloquent portrait of a black family in the rural south. Ward, who is from a small town in Mississippi, is now a Stegner Fellow at Stanford University.

The winner in the Nonfiction category is *Ida: A Sword Among Lions* by Paula J. Giddings (Amistad/Harper Collins). The nonfiction honor book winner is *Letter To My Daughter* by Maya Angelou (Random House, Inc.)

Ida: A Sword Among Lions is a brilliantly written biography of Ida B. Wells, an amazing African American woman, who crusaded against all odds for justice for African Americans. Giddings brings to life Well's place in American history during a tumultuous, shameful era. She traces the life of Wells from her investigation of the first Memphis lynching of 1892 (arousing public awareness) to organizing and contributing to the foundation of the Black women's reform movement. The lessons learned from this outstanding book are thought-provoking with pain-staking details. Paula J. Giddings is the Elizabeth A. Woodson 1922 Professor in Afro-American Studies at Smith College.

In this compilation of essays, *Letter To My Daughter*, Maya Angelou provides a personal and spiritual tour of her life experiences. Although she is the mother of only one biological child, a son, Angelou addresses these essays to her thousands of daughters world-wide. Covering topics that range from sexual abuse to the world of entertainment, the author gives us an intimate glimpse of the many threads that it has taken to weave the magical tapestry that is Maya Angelou. Poet, writer, performer, teacher, and director, Maya Angelou resides in Harlem, NY and Winston-Salem, NC.

The recipient of the First Novelist Award is Carleen Brice for *Orange Mint and Honey* (One World/Ballentine). Shay Dixon, a broke and burned out graduate student, is forced to return home to live with her alcoholic mother who had abandoned her as a child. Her mother is now clean and sober and has another young daughter. Shay is forced to deal with her feelings for her mother and new sister. She needs to try to forgive her mother while healing herself in this honest and bittersweet journey to self-discovery. Carleen Brice, an editor and author of non-fiction books, lives in Denver.

For excellence in scholarship, the BCALA Literary Awards Committee presents the Outstanding Contribution to Publishing Citation to *Obama: The Historic Campaign in Photographs* (Amistad/HarperCollins) by Deborah Willis and Kevin Merida. This work provides an historic and intimate portrayal of the remarkable journey that led to Barack Obama becoming the 44th President of the United States. The captivating photographs selected by Willis are combined with keen commentary by Merida to chronicle the incredible 2008 campaign. Additionally, the photo book presents a unique and insightful glimpse into the essence of Obama, the man and his family. Photo historian, curator, and photographer, Deborah Willis is chair and professor of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, Department of Photography and Imaging. She lives in New York City. Kevin Merida is an associate editor at the Washington Post. He currently resides in Maryland.

Members of the BCALA Literary Awards Jury are: Joel W. White, Chair, Durham (NC) County Library; Virginia Dowsing Toliver, Vice Chair, Washington University; Gladys Smiley Bell, Hampton University; Lisa M. Boyd, National Library of Medicine; Karen B. Douglas, Duke University Law Library; Carolyn Garnes, Atlanta, GA; and Ernestine Hawkins, East Cleveland Public Library.