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GARSTANG, BERG, AND KEENER-MIKENAS RECEIVE LITERARY AWARDS

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(Richmond, Virginia) – The Library of Virginia is pleased to announce the winners of the 16th Annual Library of Virginia Literary Awards, sponsored by Dominion. The October 19 awards celebration was hosted by award-winning Virginia author David Baldacci. Awards categories were fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and literary lifetime achievement. Winners of the Library of Virginia’s Annual Literary Awards receive a monetary prize and a handsome engraved crystal book.

Clifford Garstang is the recipient of the **2013 Emyl Jenkins Sexton Literary Award for Fiction** for *What the Zhang Boys Know*, which the judges felt was a seamless tale of an immigrant seeking a new wife and mother for his sons. The novel is an enticing collection of interconnected stories about characters who live in a condominium in Washington, D.C.

Clifford Garstang began writing fiction after a career in international law with one of the world’s largest law firms and with the World Bank in Washington, D.C. His first book, the story collection *In an Uncharted Country* (2009), has been described as “impeccably written, sumptuously imagined, and completely enchanting,” and his second book, the novel in stories *What the Zhang Boys Know* (2012), was called “a wonderful and haunting book.” His work has appeared in *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Blackbird*, *Cream City Review*, *Tampa Review*, and elsewhere, and has received Distinguished Mention in the Best American Series. He was a 2010 Walter E. Dakin Fellow at the Sewanee Writers’ Conference. In addition to degrees in philosophy, English, law, and public administration, he holds an MFA from Queens University of Charlotte. He is the co-founder and editor of *Prime Number Magazine* and currently lives near Staunton, Virginia.

The other finalists for the fiction prize were: *The Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers and *The Right Hand Shore* by Christopher Tilghman. The judges praised Powers’s poetic and moving story of a young soldier’s passage through fields of memory and catastrophic ruin. *The Right Hand Shore* by Tilghman was judged a radiant novel of deep insight and imagination that revisits central dilemmas of American history such as race, family, and forbidden love in the wake of the American Civil War.

The winner of the **2012 Literary Award for Nonfiction** is **Scott W. Berg** for *38 Nooses: Lincoln, Little Crow, and the Beginning of the Frontier’s End*. The judges felt that Berg’s vivid account of the 1862 the Dakota War in Minnesota—which began with a broken treaty, ended with the largest mass execution in American history, and ushered in a pattern of tragedy from Little Bighorn to Wounded Knee—offers important insight on a little-known but vitally important episode in American history.

Born and raised in Minnesota’s Twin Cities, Berg received a BA in architecture from the University of Minnesota, an MA in English from Miami University of Ohio, and an MFA in creative writing from George Mason University, where

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he now teaches nonfiction writing and literature. Since 1999, he has also been a contributor to the *Washington Post* and other publications. His principal research interests include place origins, architectural history, urban history, and the intersections of lesser-known individuals with history's more famous figures. Berg lives in Reston, Virginia, with his wife and their two sons.

The other nonfiction finalists were: *Martha Jefferson Randolph, Daughter of Monticello: Her Life and Times* by Cynthia A. Kierner and *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery* by Heather Andrea Williams. *Martha Jefferson Randolph* is a well-researched biography that presents Thomas Jefferson's eldest child as a woman who deftly balanced her demanding public roles as a president's hostess and governor's wife with her domestic management of a large and complicated household.

Inspired by post-Civil War newspaper notices placed by former slaves in Virginia and other southern states seeking information about parents, siblings, spouses, and children, *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery* presents a compelling story of both devastating moments of separation and families' arduous journeys to reconnect.

Luann Keener-Mikenas won the **2013 Literary Award for Poetry** for *Homeland*. *Homeland* explores a variety of subjects from the wonder of American nature to the brutality and horror of modernity in poems replete with masterful lyricism that sing of a "many-corridor memory" in art, science, and history, according to the judges.

LuAnn Keener-Mikenas is an award-winning author of two collections of poems, *Homeland* and *Color Documentary*. Her work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Shenandoah*, *Quarterly West*, *Chelsea*, *New Orleans Review*, *Louisiana Literature*, and many other publications, and is anthologized in *Entering the Real World* (Virginia Center for the Creative Arts' 40th-anniversary anthology), the Guy Owen Prize edition of *Southern Poetry Review*, *The Mind's Eye*, *A Fierce Brightness: Twenty-five Years of Women's Poetry*, *Buck and Wing: Southern Poetry at 2000*, *Worlds in Our Words: Contemporary American Women Writers*, and *The First Yes: Poems About Communication*. Her honors include a Virginia Prize for Poetry and first-place poetry awards from Writers at Work, *Chelsea*, the Mary Roberts Rinehart Foundation, and *America's Review*, as well as a Pushcart nomination. She is a fellow of the MacDowell Colony and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Keener-Mikenas's work has increasingly focused on the environmental crisis and the remaking and spiritualization of our relationship with the natural world. She earned an MFA from the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville and taught English at Virginia Tech before making a career change. She is a licensed clinical social worker in private practice, a counselor at Randolph College, and a provider for Centra Hospice.

The other poetry prize finalists were *Secure the Shadow: Poems* by Claudia Emerson and *Blacksnake at the Family Reunion: Poems* by David Huddle. Writing of death and loss with realism and dignity, Emerson balances pain and grief in *Secure the Shadow*, a beautiful book that sounds the depths of love to find wisdom, freedom, and affirmations of life. The judges felt that Huddle's *Blacksnake at the Family Reunion* was a deceptively simple mélange of poems, gathering emotional momentum as it slithers through an almost confessional investigation of family, childhood, and relationships.

The winners of the **People's Choice Awards** are ***Come August, Come Freedom* by Gigi Amateau** in the **fiction category** and ***Whispers of Rebellion: Narrating Gabriel's Conspiracy* by Dr. Michael Nicholls** in the **nonfiction category**. Winners are chosen by readers voting online and in libraries. Winners of the People's Choice Awards receive a monetary prize and an engraved crystal book.

R. T. Smith, writer-in-residence at Washington and Lee University, editor of W & L's literary journal, *Shenandoah*, and author of 13 books of poetry, is the recipient of the **2013 Carole Weinstein Prize in Poetry**. Among Smith's works are *Messenger* and *Outlaw Style*, both recipients of the Library of Virginia's literary award for poetry. The Weinstein Prize recognizes significant recent contributions to the art of poetry and is awarded on the basis of a range of achievement in the field of poetry. There is no formal application process or competition. Selection and notification of the annual prize is made by a three-member board of curators.

The recipient of the 2013 Library of Virginia **Literary Lifetime Achievement Award** is **Charles Wright**. Wright received one of the Library of Virginia's inaugural literary awards in 1998 for *Black Zodiac* and won again in 2003 for *A Short History of the Shadow*. He was a finalist in 2005 with *Buffalo Yoga* and in 2008 with *Littlefoot*. The author of more than 21 books, his many honors include the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award in Poetry, the PEN Translation Prize, the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, the Lenore Marshall Prize from the Academy of American Poets, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Griffin Poetry Prize, and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. A professor emeritus at the University of Virginia, Wright retired in 2010 after serving as the Souder Family Professor of English there since 1983.

The first **Art in Literature: The Mary Lynn Kotz Award** went to Turkish novelist, screenwriter, and recipient of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature **Orhan Pamuk**. This award is presented in partnership with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

Next year's Literary Awards Celebration will be held on October 18, 2014.

October 11, 2013