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## **Winners Announced in Texas Institute of Letters Competition**

Antonio Ruiz-Camacho took top prize Saturday evening in the Texas Institute of Letters' literary competition for works published in 2015, claiming the \$6,000 Jesse H. Jones Fiction award for his short story collection, *Barefoot Dogs*, published by Scribner.

The award was presented by Texas Institute of Letters President Andrés Tijerina at the 80<sup>th</sup> meeting of the organization at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center and at the Bullock Texas State History Museum, both in Austin. The Texas Institute of Letters (TIL) was founded in 1936 to recognize literary achievement and to promote interest in Texas literature.

Jan Jarboe Russell won the Carr P. Collins Award for Best Book of Nonfiction (\$5,000) for *The Train to Crystal City: FDR's Secret Prisoner Exchange Program and America's Only Family Internment Camp During World War II*. Russell's book also was published by Scribner. It has been widely and positively reviewed, with *The Wall Street Journal* calling it a "richly detailed history...[that] captures the uncertain and emotionally chaotic experience of the camp's prisoners."

Austin novelist Sarah Bird received the Lon Tinkle Award for a distinguished career in letters associated with Texas. Bird is the award-winning author of numerous best-selling, critically acclaimed books, including her most recent novel, *Above the East China Sea*, which garnered some of the best reviews of her career. Her newest book, the nonfiction *A Love Letter to Texas Women*, released earlier this month, pays tribute to the “undeniably special. . . Texas woman.” In addition to being a highly regarded author, Bird is a successful magazine journalist—she’s a writer-at-large for *Texas Monthly*—and has written screenplays for Paramount, CBS, Warner Bros, National Geographic, ABC, TNT and independent producers . Last year, she was one of the winners of a prestigious screenwriting competition sponsored by Meryl Streep.

More than \$20,000 in prize money was awarded by TIL to authors and others in the categories of fiction, non-fiction, scholarly, short stories, poetry, short nonfiction, book design, translation, and children and young adult. The competition is limited to writers, designers, and translators who have lived in the state for at least two years or have entries pertaining to Texas subjects.

Ruiz-Camacho made a bold debut with *Barefoot Dogs*, his first book. It received enthusiastic reviews from some of America’s top critics, with the *New York Times* calling it “. . . a deeply moving chronicle of one family’s collective devastation, full of remarkable wisdom and humor, yet unflinching in its portrayal of the horrors sweeping contemporary Mexico.” Ruiz-Camacho, like Sarah Bird, was hosted by the TIL as a Dobie Paisano Fellow. The University of Texas in conjunction with TIL has sponsored the fellowships for 49 years. TIL recognized the current Paisano Fellows at the banquet. They are fiction author Nan Cuba and poet Kathleen Winter.

Andrew Torget III won the Ramirez Family Award for Most Significant Scholarly Book for *Seeds of Empire* (The University of North Carolina Press). This award carries a prize of \$2,500. Subtitled “Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800–1850,” Torget’s book presents “the most nuanced and authoritative rewriting of Texas’s origin myth to date,” according to *Texas Monthly*.

Other winners were: Mary Helen Specht, *Migratory Animals* (Harper Perennial), Steven Turner Award for Best First Published Fiction; Laurie Ann Guerrero, *A Crown for Gumecindo* (Aztlan Libre Press), Helen C. Smith Award for Best Book of Poetry; J. Scott Brownlee, *Requiem for Used Ignition Cap (The Orison Poetry Prize)*, Bob Bush Memorial Award for First Book of Poetry; W.K. Stratton, "My Brother's Secret," in *Texas Monthly* (February 2015), Edwin "Bud" Shrake Award for Short Nonfiction; Brian Van Reet, "The Chaff," in *Iowa Review*, Kay Cattarulla Short Story Award; Andrea Caillouet, *The Luck Archive: Exploring Belief, Superstition, and Tradition* by Mark Menjivar (Trinity University Press), Fred Whitehead Award for Design of a Trade Book; Marian Schwartz, *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy (Yale University Press), Soeurette Diehl Fraser Award for Best Translation of a Book; Don Tate, *The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton: Poet* (Peachtree Publishers), H-E-B/Jean Flynn Children's Book Award; Brian Yansky, *Utopia, Iowa* (Candlewick), H-E-B Young Adults Book Award; Pat Mora, *The Remembering Day / El dia de los muertos* (Arte Público Press), Denton Record-Chronicle Best Children's Picture Book.

Eight new members were inducted into the organization. They were: Suzette Bishop, Laredo; Melissa del Bosque, Austin; Laurie Ann Guerrero, San Antonio; Kathryn Jones, Walnut Springs; James C. Kearney, Weimar; Joanne Leedom-Ackerman, Washington, DC; Cleatus Rattan, Cisco; and Carol Coffee Reposo, San Antonio.

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