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THE LOVE SONGS OF W.E.B DU BOIS BY HONORÉE FANONNE JEFFERS

AND HOW THE WORD IS PASSED BY CLINT SMITH

NAMED WINNERS OF 2022 DAYTON LITERARY PEACE PRIZE

***What Comes After* by Joanne Tompkins and *Invisible Child* by Andrea Elliott named runners-up**

Dayton, OH (September 28, 2022) – *The Love Songs of W.E.B. Du Bois* by Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, and *How the Word is Passed* by Clint Smith, two books exploring the indelible legacy of slavery in America, were named the winners of the 2022 Dayton Literary Peace Prize for fiction and nonfiction, respectively.

What Comes After, Joanne Tompkins' deeply moving account of strangers and friends not only helping each other forward after tragedy, but inspiring a new kind of family, was named runner-up for fiction. *Invisible Child* by Andrea Elliott, the unforgettable story of Dasani Coates, a homeless girl whose indomitable spirit is tested by poverty and racism in an unequal America, was named runner-up for nonfiction.

Inspired by the Dayton Peace Accords, The Dayton Literary Peace Prize honors writers whose work uses the power of literature to foster peace, social justice, and global understanding. Launched in 2006, it is recognized as one of the world's most prestigious literary honors, and is the only international literary peace prize awarded in the United States. This year's winners will be honored at a gala ceremony hosted by Gilbert King, author of *Devil in the Grove* and *Beneath the Ruthless Sun*, in Dayton on Sunday, November 13, 2022. Winners receive a \$10,000 honorarium and runners-up receive \$5,000.

"This year's winners remind us just how much our collective history and, indeed, individual lives have been shaped by the legacy of slavery," said Sharon Rab, founder and co-chair of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation. "From different perspectives, Jeffers and Smith show us the depth of America's scars, and how much is yet to be done before we can hope for peace."

The 2022 Dayton Literary Peace in Fiction:

[*The Love Songs of W.E.B. Du Bois*](#) (HarperCollins) by 2020 NAACP Image Award-winning poet Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, follows Ailey Pearl Garfield, who understands Du Bois's theory of "Double Consciousness" all too well, bearing the names of two formidable Black Americans. Ailey is reared in the City but spends summers in the small Georgia town of Chicassetta, where her mother's family has lived since their ancestors arrived from Africa in bondage. From an early age, Ailey fights a battle for belonging that's made all the more difficult by a hovering trauma, as well as the whispers of women—her mother, Belle, her sister, Lydia, and a maternal line reaching back two centuries—that urge Ailey to succeed in their stead.

To come to terms with her own identity, Ailey embarks on a journey through her family's past, uncovering the shocking tales of generations of ancestors—Indigenous, Black, and white—in the deep South. In doing so, Ailey must learn to embrace her full heritage, a legacy of oppression and resistance, bondage and independence, cruelty and resilience that is the story—and the song—of America itself.

On receiving the prize, Jeffers said: "As the descendant of enslaved African Americans, and as a person who was reared on land that once belonged—and to my mindful logic, *still* belongs—to Southeastern Indigenous peoples, I frequently contemplate peace.

I know it's not a raised voice, but is it silence? I know it's not a coming to blows, but is it backing away from a fight, the absence of conflict? I used to believe that peace meant serenity between bodies or nations or kin. When I became a writer—or I should say, when I *accepted* the fact that I'd always been a writer—I sought to balance a claimed calmness in my spirit with an acknowledgement of history, but history is not always a site of peace. A balancing—a peaceful journey—seemed an impossible task, like reversing gravity—floating up instead of falling—or putting blood back into a vein.

I have trod this writer's path for many more years than I haven't and I believe that peace equals naming. A litany of ancestors and chosen kin, an utterance, the tonal truth of what occurred, when few want to accept or even know the past. This is peace, even when the present or past isn't joyful. This is peace: a knowing that my voice equals thunder, only because I am speaking an urged echo. The syllables I can claim only because someone now dead told me, *Tell them. Speak. Write it down*—all that I make is an *again* that was made before me. My peace is a quelling of the fear that a story might be lost. This is what the dead ones passed to me: the toll, and the toil in this fearful time of breaking, but a courageous time of salvation, if we would but name. This wisdom is quick, what I've only just learned. Yet this is what I hope to hand to the newly speaking, before I, too, am called to leave."

The 2022 Dayton Literary Peace Prize in Nonfiction:

In [*How the Word is Passed*](#) (Little, Brown & Company), #1 New York Times bestselling author Clint Smith examines the legacy of slavery in America—and how both history and memory continue to shape our everyday lives. In his deeply researched exploration, Smith leads the reader on an unforgettable tour of monuments and landmarks and illustrates how some of our country's most essential stories are hidden in plain view—whether in places we might drive by on our way to work, holidays such as Juneteenth, or entire neighborhoods like downtown Manhattan. Informed by scholarship and brought to life by the story of people living today, *How the Word Is Passed* is a landmark of reflection and insight that offers a new understanding of how slavery has been central in shaping our nation's collective history, and ourselves.

On winning the prize for nonfiction, Smith said: "When I was a child growing up in New Orleans, I remember being inundated—in ways both explicit and subtle—with messages touting the things that were wrong with Black people. It was a seemingly endless barrage of pathology that was wielded to suggest Black people were singularly responsible for the inequality we were experiencing. I remember a feeling of social and emotional paralysis, knowing that what I was hearing was wrong, but not having the language, the tool kit, or the framework with which to push back against it. I had little understanding of the historical phenomena that underpinned racial inequality in New Orleans and across the country. I did not have the historical acumen to challenge the ideas that I knew in my gut were dangerous and untrue.

How the Word Is Passed is my effort to write the sort of book that I felt like I needed when I was in my high school American History class. It is an effort to establish a clearer connection between the past and present. It is an effort to help the younger version of me more fully understand how the legacy of slavery has shaped the way that my city, my state, and my country look the way that they do today. Without an accurate sense of history, there can be no sense of peace. We must engage rigorously with the past in order to accurately understand the landscape of contemporary inequality. Without a shared understanding of what came before us, we will continue to see fissures that break us further apart."

The 2022 Dayton Literary Peace Prize Runner Up in Fiction:

[*What Comes After*](#) (Penguin Random House), by JoAnne Tompkins is a propulsive mystery set in misty, coastal Washington State, where Isaac, who lives alone with his dog, is grieving the recent death of his teenage son Daniel. Next door, Lorrie struggles with a heinous act committed by her own teenage son. Separated by only a silvery stretch of trees, the two parents are emotionally stranded, isolated by their great losses—until they meet pregnant, sixteen-year-old Evangeline. Evangeline's arrival feels like a blessing, but she is also clearly hiding something. When Isaac isn't equipped to handle her alone, Lorrie forges her own relationship with the girl. Soon all three characters are forced to examine what really

happened in their overlapping pasts, and what it all possibly means for a shared future. *What Comes After* offers an unforgettable story of loss and anger, but also of kindness and hope, courage and forgiveness.

On receiving the prize, Tompkins said: “Peace—or lack of peace—begins in the heart of each individual. If we cannot be at peace within ourselves, how can we be at peace within our families, our neighborhoods, our work places? If we cannot forgive those we love and hold with affection, how will we ever open our hearts to those we dismiss as enemy or fail to see as fully human? Perhaps the greatest question of our lives is how do we, as individuals, grow our hearts in peace and in love. How do we loosen the constrictions of grievance and resentment, how do we free ourselves from our biases and distortions of perception so that we may see more clearly, so that we may create more peace in this world? Deeply drawn characters arouse curiosity in us, allow us to look beyond surface differences, beyond the labels we reflexively impose, and, in doing so, we invariably come face-to-face with ourselves. We discover that we are not alone in our struggle to forgive, to love, to reconnect with life after loss and betrayal, that we are all, at some level, seeking peace in our lives. This is what literature offers, a place to locate in others—no matter how unfamiliar the character’s habitus or attitudes or life situation—the same heart that beats inside us, one that longs to be seen, to be part of a larger community, to love and be loved. And, it is in this understanding of our one shared heart, our one shared life, where peace can be found.”

The 2022 Dayton Literary Peace Prize Runner Up in Nonfiction:

[*Invisible Child*](#) (Penguin Random House), by 2022 Pulitzer Prize winner Andrea Elliott, follows eight years in the life of Dasani Coates, a girl whose imagination is as soaring as the skyscrapers near her Brooklyn shelter. In this sweeping narrative, Elliott weaves the story of Dasani’s childhood with the history of her ancestors from slavery to the Great Migration north. As Dasani comes of age, the homeless crisis in New York City has exploded amid the deepening chasm between rich and poor. Dasani guides her siblings through a city riddled by hunger, violence, drug addiction, homelessness, and the monitoring of child protection services. When she finally escapes to enroll in a boarding school, she faces an impossible question: what if leaving poverty means abandoning your family, and even yourself? *Invisible Child* tells a story about resilience, family, and the cost of inequality. Based on nearly a decade of reporting, *Invisible Child* illuminates critical issues in contemporary America, through the life of one remarkable girl.

On receiving the prize, Elliott said: “It is, most often, the absence of peace that draws a journalist’s attention. We are pulled into war zones, natural disasters, political uprisings, global epidemics. Each crisis, and its aftermath, invites competing narratives. It then falls to the journalist to sort fact from fiction, all in the pursuit of clarity and ‘truth.’ But the longer we immerse – through the act of showing up, through the art of listening, through the patience of observation – the closer we come to something more profound. We might describe this as ‘understanding,’ a word so common we have forgotten its origins. It comes from Old English, *understandan*, which means ‘to stand in the midst of.’ To understand does not mean we have arrived at the ultimate truth, but that we have – in truth’s pursuit – stood in the midst of the world, which is to see all of its dimensions.”

Organizers previously announced that Wil Haygood, author of multiple nonfiction books chronicling the lives of 20th-century Black Americans, including *The Butler*, was awarded the 2022 [Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award](#), named in honor of the noted U.S. diplomat who helped negotiate the Dayton Peace Accords.

To be eligible for the 2022 awards, English-language books must have been published or translated into English in 2021 and address the theme of peace on a variety of levels, such as between individuals, among families and communities, or among nations, religions, or ethnic groups.

A [judging panel](#) of prominent writers selected the winners and runners up, including former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities and Publisher of the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Jon Parrish Peede; Lisa Page, co-editor of *We Wear The Mask: 15 True Stories of Passing in America*; essayist Garnette Cadogan, editor-at-large of *Nonstop Metropolis: A New York City Atlas*; and Christopher Award winner and author of *A Loss for Words*, Lou Ann Walker.

About the Dayton Literary Peace Prize

The Dayton Literary Peace Prize honors writers whose work uses the power of literature to foster peace, social justice, and global understanding. Launched in 2006, it is recognized as one of the world's most prestigious literary honors, and is the only literary peace prize awarded in the United States. The Dayton Literary Peace Prize awards a \$10,000 cash prize each year to one fiction and one nonfiction author whose work advances peace as a solution to conflict, and leads readers to a better understanding of other cultures, peoples, religions, and political points of view. Additionally, the Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award is bestowed upon a writer whose body of work reflects the Prize's mission; previous honorees include Margaret Atwood, Wendell Berry, Taylor Branch, Geraldine Brooks, Louise Erdrich, John Irving, Barbara Kingsolver, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, N. Scott Momaday, Tim O'Brien, Marilynne Robinson, Gloria Steinem, Studs Terkel, Colm Toibin, and Elie Wiesel. For more information, visit the Dayton Literary Peace Prize media center at <http://daytonliterarypeaceprize.org/press.htm>.