

Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation Marks 20th Anniversary and Announces 2025 Winners: Salman Rushdie to Receive Holbrooke Award

- **Salman Rushdie** to receive the Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award in Dayton.
- ***Martyr!*** by **Kaveh Akbar** to receive Dayton Literary Peace Prize for Fiction; ***Black Butterflies*** by **Priscilla Morris** named runner-up.
- ***The Burning Earth: A History*** by **Sunil Amrith** to receive Dayton Literary Peace Prize for Nonfiction; ***A Map of Future Ruins: On Borders and Belonging*** by **Lauren Markham** named runner-up.
- **Mr. Rushdie** will be interviewed live on stage by two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning foreign correspondent and author **David S. Rohde** in Dayton on Saturday, November 8, as part of the awards festivities.
- **Joshua Carter**, grandson of the late President Carter (winner of the 2024 Holbrooke Award), will present the citation to Mr. Rushdie at the Dayton Awards Gala on Sunday, November 9.



Credit: Rachel Eliza Griffiths

Dayton, OH (September 26, 2025) — For two decades, The Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation has celebrated writers whose work demonstrates the power of the written word to foster peace, social justice, and global understanding. This milestone anniversary offers a moment to reflect on the legacy the organization has built, both in shaping readers and uplifting the voices of its honored writers. As the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation marks twenty years of achievement, it also cements its enduring commitment to peace through literature for generations to come.

It is with this sentiment that they are delighted to announce **Salman Rushdie** as the 2025 recipient of the **Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award**.

The Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation is also pleased to announce ***Martyr!*** by **Kaveh Akbar** (Random House) as the winner of the 2025 Dayton Literary Peace Prize for Fiction, and ***The Burning Earth: A History*** by **Sunil Amrith** (W.W. Norton) as the winner of the 2025 Dayton Literary Peace Prize for Nonfiction. ***Black Butterflies*** by **Priscilla Morris** (Knopf) has been named the runner-up in the fiction category, and ***A Map of Future Ruins: On Borders and Belonging*** by **Lauren Markham** (Random House) has been named the runner-up in the nonfiction category.



The fiction and nonfiction winners each receive a \$10,000 cash prize, and the fiction and nonfiction runners-up each receive a \$5,000 cash prize. The Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation will honor this year's winners and runners-up at an awards ceremony in Dayton, Ohio the weekend of November 8-9, 2025.

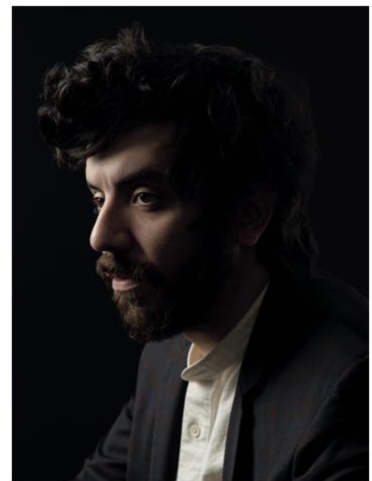
When informed of his award win, **Salman Rushdie** said, ***"In this time of war abroad and turmoil at home, it feels more important than ever to speak of peace. I'm grateful for this opportunity to celebrate the beauty and urgent necessity of peace, and to remember that art is always in the service of that cause."***

On the decision to honor Rushdie with the Holbrooke Award, **Nicholas A. Raines**, Executive Director of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation, said, ***"In a moment when our world finds itself ensnared in perpetual conflict, Salman Rushdie's persistent and courageous efforts to guide readers through experiences they often aren't equipped to understand on their own, has never been more important. Mr. Rushdie's example of resilience and forgiveness, even in the face of violence, makes him a beacon of light within our ranks. His voice is indispensable to all who fight for peace."***

Salman Rushdie is the author of 22 acclaimed works of fiction and nonfiction, translated into more than 40 languages that have influenced generations of readers to stand firmly for the principle that words must be free. Rushdie's lifetime of work is as courageous as it is wide-reaching. The Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation's recognition of his unshakable commitment to the written word as a force for empathy and peace is both a great honor and a powerful acknowledgment of how his visionary storytelling and unwavering support for free expression has helped shape global conversations.

A finalist for the 2024 National Book Award, Kaveh Akbar's ***Martyr!*** is a haunting debut novel that follows Cyrus Shams, a queer Iranian-American poet grappling with grief and addiction. As he navigates the aftermath of his mother's tragic death and his own unraveling, Akbar delivers a lyrical exploration of identity, faith, and the search for meaning.

In response to winning the award, Akbar said: ***"To fully apprehend and act against the myriad atrocities we, as a species, levy on each other, first we must be able to perceive the vital and complex humanity of the harmed. Stories help. It is a privilege to be recognized by a prize that understands peace as art's ultimate horizon."***



Credit: Beowulf Sheehan



Credit: Mara Lavitt

Awarded the 2024 Fukuoka Academic Prize, Sunil Amrith's ***The Burning Earth*** offers a sweeping global history of how humanity has shaped the planet and vice versa. Amrith, a historian and 2017 MacArthur Fellow, delves into the intersections of climate, migration, and inequality, providing a compelling narrative that challenges our understanding of the modern world.

In response to winning the award, Amrith said:
"I am deeply honored to be recognized by the

Dayton Literary Peace Prize alongside so many great writers. It is particularly meaningful to me to have The Burning Earth recognized as a book that promotes peace. The values embodied by the Dayton Literary Peace Prize are more vital to our future than they have ever been."

Shortlisted for the 2023 Women's Prize for Fiction, Priscilla Morris's ***Black Butterflies*** is a powerful debut novel set during the Siege of Sarajevo. Each night, nationalist gangs erect barricades, splitting the city into ethnic enclaves. Each morning, the locals—whether Bosniak, Croat, or Serb—push them aside. When violence finally erupts, Zora, an artist and teacher, sends her family away to safety. She stays behind, reluctant to believe that hostilities will last. As the city falls under siege, her home is laid to waste, yet Zora finds ways to rebuild.

Upon being named the fiction runner-up, Morris said, ***"I am hugely honored and deeply grateful that my debut novel has been recognized by the Dayton Literary Peace Prize. It is especially meaningful given the connection between Dayton and Sarajevo. Works of literature that promote peaceful co-existence and resistance to war are needed now more than ever."***



Credit: Conor Horgan



Credit: Andrea Lo

A finalist for the California Book Award and the Northern California Book Award, Lauren Markham's ***A Map of Future Ruins*** is a poignant exploration of migration, identity, and the human cost of borders. In 2021, journalist Markham went to Greece in search of her heritage and to cover the aftermath of a fire that destroyed the largest refugee camp in Europe, for which six young Afghan refugees had been arrested. Markham soon saw that she was tracing a broader narrative: in this trailblazing synthesis of reporting, history, myth, memoir, and essay, she helps us see that the stories we tell about migration don't just explain what happened. They predict the future.

Upon being named the nonfiction runner-up, Markham said, ***"Being a runner-up for the Dayton Literary Peace Prize is deeply moving to me. A Map of Future Ruins grapples with the asymmetries of the stories we tell about immigrations past and present, and the way these narratives determine our politics and policies. This prize affirms my belief in the power of writing and words—however feeble they can feel in these times of great turmoil—to transform our understanding of the world in which we live, and its possible futures."***

Salman Rushdie is the author of twenty-two acclaimed works of fiction and nonfiction, many of which have been translated into more than forty languages: *Grimus* (1975), *Midnight's Children* (1981), *Shame* (1983), *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey* (1987), *The Satanic Verses* (1988), *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991* (1991), *East, West* (1994), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), *Fury* (2001), *Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992–2002* (2002), *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010), *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* (2012), *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015), *The Golden House* (2017), *Quichotte* (2019), *Languages of Truth: Essays 2003–2020* (2021), *Victory City* (2023), *Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder* (2024) and the forthcoming *The Eleventh Hour: A Quintet of Stories* (Random House) which will publish on November 4, 2025.

Over the course of his career, Rushdie has been awarded some of the world's most prestigious literary honors. *Midnight's Children* won the Booker Prize in 1981 and was later named both "Booker of Bookers" (1993) and "Best of the Booker" (2008). He was knighted for his services to literature in 2007, received the PEN/Pinter Prize in 2014, and in 2023 was honored with Germany's Peace Prize of the German Book Trade.

Beyond his writing, Rushdie has been an unflinching advocate for the freedom of expression. Since the fatwa issued against him in 1989 following the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, he has stood as a global symbol of artistic courage, defending writers and intellectuals under threat. As president of PEN America and through his public voice, he has championed free thought and the power of literature to foster empathy, challenge tyranny, and deepen human understanding. His books continue to resonate worldwide, shaping generations of readers and reaffirming the enduring belief that words must be free.

Mr. Rushdie will be in conversation with **David S. Rohde**, a two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting. Mr. Rohde is the national security and law editor at NBC News and a former executive editor of *The New Yorker* website. He worked as a foreign correspondent and national security reporter for the *New York Times*, *Reuters* and the *Christian Science Monitor* and covered the wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bosnia. He lives in New York with his wife and two daughters.



Joshua Carter will introduce and award the Holbrooke citation to Mr. Rushdie. Mr. Carter made the opening remarks and accepted the Holbrooke award in 2024 for his grandfather, President Jimmy Carter, in absentia. Joshua Carter is the fourth grandchild of President Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter. He is a small business owner, and the writer, producer, and host of the “Unchanging Principles Podcast,” where he talks about his life in a Presidential family and the American values taught to him by his grandparents.

To purchase tickets for the November 8th conversation with Salman Rushdie, please visit:
<http://daytonlive.org/events/DLPP>. **To purchase tickets for the gala on November 9th, please contact** info@daytonliterarypeaceprize.org **or visit the** [DLPP website](http://daytonliterarypeaceprize.org).

About the Dayton Literary Peace Prize

The Dayton Literary Peace Prize honors writers whose work uses the power of the written word 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 Ambassador 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, Sandra Cisneros, Wil Haygood, Louise Erdrich, John Irving, Barbara Kingsolver, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, N. Scott Momaday, Tim O’Brien, Marilynne Robinson, Gloria Steinem, Studs Terkel, Colm Tóibín, and Elie Wiesel.

About the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation

The Foundation offers programming to high schools, colleges & universities, and libraries, including its Student Author Series, Community Conversations with the Ohio Public Library Network, among others. A primarily volunteer organization since its conception, the DLPP Foundation depends on donations from individuals, corporations, universities and local government to sustain its efforts. Learn more about how you can get involved via the [DLPP website](http://daytonliterarypeaceprize.org).

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