

Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation Announces 2026 Winners Ann Patchett to Receive Holbrooke Award

- ***The Sunflower Boys* by Sam Wachman** to receive Dayton Literary Peace Prize for Fiction; ***Wild Dark Shore* by Charlotte McConaghy** named runner-up.
- ***Mother Emanuel: Two Centuries of Race, Resistance, and Forgiveness in One Charleston Church* by Kevin Sack** to receive Dayton Literary Peace Prize for Nonfiction; ***Original Sins: The (Mis)education of Black and Native Children and the Construction of American Racism* by Eve Ewing** named runner-up.
- **Ann Patchett** to receive the Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award in Dayton, OH.
- **Ms. Patchett** will be interviewed live on stage in Dayton on Saturday, November 7, as part of the awards festivities.

Dayton, OH (September 17, 2026) — The Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation, the first and only international literary peace prize awarded in the United States, today announces the winners for the 2026 Dayton Literary Peace Prize, honoring books published in 2025. [*The Sunflower Boys* by Sam Wachman](#) (HarperCollins) is the winner for fiction, and [*Mother Emanuel: Two Centuries of Race, Resistance, and Forgiveness in One Charleston Church* by Kevin Sack](#) (Crown) is the winner for nonfiction. [*Wild Dark Shore* by Charlotte McConaghy](#) (Flatiron Books) has been named the runner-up in the fiction category, and [*Original Sins: The \(Mis\)education of Black and Native Children and the Construction of American Racism* by Eve L. Ewing](#) (One World/PRH) has been named the runner-up in the nonfiction category.

Nicholas A. Raines, Executive Director of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation, said in regards to this year's honorees, *"Year after year, our community and judges seek out and find four extraordinarily powerful books that center a story that promotes peace and understanding in a world where those ideals continue to feel more foreign with each passing year. These four books each offer something unique to readers that we hope will continue to inspire and teach for many years to come. I'd like to remind readers that recommending the work of Dayton Literary Peace Prize honorees helps put their books into the hands of others. With that one small gesture we can all participate in a chance to better understand our neighbors."*

Inspired by the Dayton Peace Accords that ended the Bosnian War in 1995, the annual Dayton Literary Peace Prize honors writers whose work demonstrates the power of the written word to foster peace, social justice, and global understanding. 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 7-8, 2026.





Credit: Paul Shelman

Sam Wachman is a writer from Cambridge, Massachusetts, with Ukrainian roots. His debut novel, ***The Sunflower Boys***, follows twelve-year-old Artem's life in Ukraine. Artem has struggled with romantic feelings for his best friend. In a country where love between boys is unthinkable, Artem worries this will undo his life. Until one night, Artem and his younger brother are woken by explosions. The Russians destroy their home, killing their mother and leaving the boys to fend for themselves. Fleeing to find their father, the brothers traverse the country with nothing but their backpacks and each other.

In response to winning the award, Wachman said: ***"I'm deeply honored. I wrote *The Sunflower Boys* so that readers could live inside a Ukrainian childhood before the bombs fell and feel the loss as their own. To receive the only literary peace***

prize awarded in this country, while the war Artem and Yuri fled is still raging, means more than I can say. My gratitude goes to the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation and to the people who trusted me with their stories."



Kevin Sack's ***Mother Emanuel: Two Centuries of Race, Resistance, and Forgiveness in One Charleston Church*** is the inspiring history of a Charleston Church's profound grief, unbending faith, and how Black suffering is shaped by forgiveness. Through the microcosm of one congregation, Sack explores the development of a unique practice of Christianity, from its daring breakaway from White churches in 1817, through the traumas of the Civil War and Reconstruction, to its critical role in the Civil Rights Movement and beyond.

In response to winning the award, Sack said: ***"It is such a distinctly meaningful honor for this book to be recognized as an instrument of peace, and so my deepest thanks go to the judges and administrators of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize. I take the recognition both as a tribute to the nine beautiful people who lost their lives to hate at Mother Emanuel in 2015, and as***

reaffirmation that the history of Black resistance to white supremacy is very much our shared American story, and should not be whitewashed or diminished."

A *New York Times* bestseller, ***Wild Dark Shore*** follows the Salt family, who are the last remaining caretakers of the seed bank on the remote island of Shearwater. As rising sea levels force them into relocation, their world is upended when a mysterious woman washes ashore asking a few too many questions. A novel of breathtaking twists, dizzying beauty, and ferocious love, ***Wild Dark Shore*** is about the impossible choices we make to protect the people we love, even as the world around us disappears.



Credit: Em Daniels



Eve Ewing's ***Original Sins: The (Mis)education of Black and Native Children and the Construction of American Racism*** is a magnificent

historical tour-de-force, that explains that schools were envisioned by Thomas Jefferson to fortify the country's racial hierarchy. They were designed to propagate the idea of white intellectual superiority, to "civilize" Native students and to prepare Black students for menial labor. With meticulous research and a warm, accessible voice, she shows that the U.S. educational system still prepares children to expect unequal treatment throughout their lives. While these dynamics are less overt today, the most insidious aspects of the system continue under the radar: standardized testing, tracking, school discipline, and access to resources

Ann Patchett is the author of ten novels, the #1 *New York Times* bestselling *Whistler*, as well as works of nonfiction and children's books: *A Patron Saint of Liars* (1992), *Taft* (1994), *The Magician's Assistant* (1997), *Bel Canto* (2001), *Truth & Beauty: A Friendship* (2004), *Run* (2007), *What Now?* (2008), *State of Wonder* (2011), *The Getaway Car: A Practical Memoir about Writing and Life* (2011), *This Is the Story of a Happy Marriage* (2014), *Commonwealth* (2016), *Nashville: Scenes From the New American South* (2018), *The Dutch House* (2019), *Lambslide* (2019), *Escape Goat* (2020), *These Precious Days* (2022), *Tom Lake* (2023), *The Verts* (2024), *Whistler* (2026).

Patchett's books have been translated into more than thirty languages and have influenced generations of readers to believe in the transformative power of storytelling and community. Her lifetime of work is as deeply empathetic as it is far-reaching. The Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation's recognition of Patchett's legacy honors not only her unshakable commitment to the written word as a force for connection and understanding, but also her relentless advocacy for independent bookshops and literary culture—especially in schools—which has helped shape global conversations.



Credit: Emily Dorio

Patchett has received numerous honors, including the PEN/Faulkner Award, the Women's Prize for Fiction, and the Book Sense Book of the Year. Her novel *The Dutch House* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. *TIME* magazine named Patchett one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World and President Biden awarded her the National Humanities Medal in recognition of her contributions to American culture. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee, where she is the owner of Parnassus Books.

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 Salman Rushdie, 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](https://www.daytonliterarypeaceprize.org/).

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