



## TEXAS INSTITUTE OF LETTERS ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 2023 LITERARY AWARDS

The Texas Institute of Letters has announced the winners of the twelve Annual TIL Literary Awards. This year, TIL will award more than \$27,000 in prizes to these writers at the TIL Awards Ceremony and Presentation in Corpus Christi, Texas on April 29, 2023.

The Texas Institute of Letters is a nonprofit Honor Society founded in 1936 to celebrate Texas literature and recognize distinctive literary achievement. The TIL's elected membership consists of the state's most respected writers— including winners of the Pulitzer Prize, National Book Award, PEN/Faulkner Award, Man Booker Prize, Academy Award, International Latino Book Award, Americas Award, Lambda Literary Award, MacArthur Fellowship, and Guggenheim Fellowship.

From President Diana López: "Each year, the TIL recognizes the best of Texas writing in a variety of genres that includes fiction, poetry, nonfiction, scholarly writing, design, and short form works. Many thanks to our judges for carefully considering the entries. This year's winners demonstrate the wonderful talent and diversity of writers with Texas roots. Celebrating their achievements is a highlight of our banquet weekend, and we are so grateful for the opportunity to recognize and support the best of Texas literature."

The winners of the 2023 TIL Literary Awards are Jennifer Sperry Steinorth, Sam W. Haynes, Bret Anthony Johnston, Gus Bova, Kirk W. Johnson, Rebecca Balcarcel, Xelena Gonzalez, Guadalupe Garcia McCall, Rudy Ruiz, Ramona Reeves, Jasminne Mendez, and Laura Villarreal. All awards are for works published in 2022, except for the biennial Fred Whitehead Award. Beverly Lowry will also receive the Texas Institute of Letters' prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award, the highest honor given by the TIL.

During the banquet weekend, the TIL will also induct twenty-six new members for 2023: fiction and nonfiction writers Rubén Degollado, Heath Dollar, Owen Egerton, Fernando Flores, Michael Parker, Terry Shames, Helen Thompson, and Christian Wallace; poets Sheila Black, Jenny Browne, Christopher Carmona, Hayan Charara, Roger Reeves, and Joaquín Zihuatanejo; children's and YA authors Brian Floca, Liz Garton Scanlon, Kari Ann Holt, Cynthia Levinson, Marcia Argueta Mickelson, Ashley Hope Pérez, and Suzan Zeder; documentary filmmaker Héctor Galán; journalists Michael Mooney and Robert Moore; and historians Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Caleb McDaniel. Newly inducted Members will read from their work during the weekend in Corpus Christi on April 28-29.

For more information on the TIL or the April 29th awards ceremony, contact Diana López, [president@texasinstituteofletters.org](mailto:president@texasinstituteofletters.org), or visit the TIL website at [www.texasinstituteofletters.org](http://www.texasinstituteofletters.org).

## THE 2023 TIL AWARD WINNERS

### Jesse H. Jones Award for Best Book of Fiction

Winner: *Valley of Shadows* by Rudy Ruiz, Blackstone Publishing.

Finalists: *The Family Izquierdo* by Rubén Degollado, Penguin Random House.  
*Ballad of Love and Glory* by Reyna Grande, Simon & Schuster



### Sergio Troncoso Award for Best First Book of Fiction

Winner: *It Falls Gently All Around and Other Stories* by Ramona Reeves, University of Pittsburgh Press.

Finalists: *Seeking Fortune Elsewhere: Stories* by Sindya Bhanoo, Catapult.  
*Remember This* by Steve Adams, University of Wisconsin Press.



### Carr P. Collins Award for Best Book of Nonfiction

Winner: *The Fisherman and the Dragon: Fear, Greed, and a Fight for Justice on the Gulf Coast* by Kirk W. Johnson, Viking.

Finalists: *Fruit Punch: A Memoir* by Kendra Allen, Ecco.  
*My Boy Will Die of Sorrow: A Memoir of Immigration from the Front Lines* by Efrén C. Olivares, Hachette Books.



### Helen C. Smith Memorial Award for Best Book of Poetry

Winner: *City Without Altar* by Jasminne Mendez, Noemi Press.

Finalists: *AfricanAmeriCan't* by Ayokunle Falomo, Flowersong Press.  
*La La Landia: A Journey Through My Frontera CD Shuffle*, Flowersong Press.

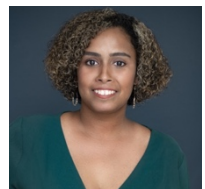


Photo by Sasha Gorel

### **John A. Robert Johnson Award for First Book of Poetry**

Winner: *Girls Guide to Leaving* by Laura Villarreal, University of Wisconsin Press.

Finalists: *We Borrowed Gentleness* by J. Estanislao Lopez, Alice James Books.

*This is Our Summons Now: Poems* by R. Joseph Rodriguez, Flowersong Press.



### **Ramirez Family Award for Most Significant Scholarly Book**

Winner: *Unsettled Land: From Revolution to Republic, The Struggle for Texas* by Sam W. Haynes, Basic Books.

Finalists: *The Haunted Southwest: Towards an Ethics of Place in Borderlands Literature* by Cordelia Barrera, Texas Tech University Press.

*Barrier to the Bays: The Islands of the Texas Coastal Bend and their Pass* by Mary Jo O'Rear, Texas A&M University Press.



### **Jean Flynn Award for Best Young Adult Book**

Winner: *Echoes of Grace* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall, Tu Books.

Finalists: *Breathe and Count Back from Ten* by Natalia Sylvester, Clarion Books.

*Islands Apart: Becoming Dominican American* by Jasminne Mendez, Piñata Books.



*Photo by Michael Mercado Smith*

### **Deirdre Siobhan FlynnBass Award for Best Middle Grade Book**

Winner: *Shine On, Luz Véliz!* by Rebecca Balcarcel, Chronicle Books.

Finalists: *New Dragon City* by Mari Mancusi, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

*Lolo's Light* by Liz Garton Scanlon, Chronicle Books.



### **Brigid Erin Flynn Award for Best Picture Book**

Winner: *Where Wonder Grows* by Xelena González, Cinco Puntos Press.

Finalists: *I'll Always Come Back to You* by Carmen Tafolla, Eerdmans Publishing.  
*Up and Adam* by Debbie Zapata, Kids Can Press.



### **Fred Whitehead Award for Best Design of a Trade Book**

Winner: *Her Read: A Graphic Poem* by Jennifer Sperry Steinorth, Texas Review Press.

Finalists: *Brackenridge: San Antonio's Acclaimed Urban Park* by Lewis Fisher, Maverick Books.  
*Arte del Pueblo* by Carmen Tafolla, Schiffer.



### **Kay Cattarulla Award for Best Short Story**

Winner: "Playing the Ghost" by Bret Anthony Johnston, *Texas Monthly*.

Finalists: "Allegiance" by Rudy Ruiz, *The Dillydoun Review*.  
"Nature Exchange" by Sindya Bhanno, *Electric Literature*.



### **Edwin "Bud" Shrake Award for Best Short Nonfiction**

Winner: "Uvalde Vive" by Gus Bova, *The Texas Observer*.

Finalists: "The Ties That Bind" by David Meischen, *The Rappahannock Review*.  
"Getaway Driver" by Lauren Hough, *Texas Highways*.

