



Arab American National Museum

NEWS

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INAUGURAL ARAB AMERICAN BOOK AWARD WINNERS TO BE HONORED AT SEPTEMBER GALA AT AANM

Dearborn, MI (August 21, 2007) – Three winning books and two honorable mentions have been selected to receive the inaugural Arab American National Museum Book Award. The winners, all published in 2006, are:

Adult Non-Fiction Winner—*The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* by Rashid Khalidi (Beacon Press)

Adult Fiction Winner—*In the Country of Men* by Hisham Matar (The Dial Press)

Children or Young Adult Winner—*One Green Apple* by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Ted Lewin (Clarion Books)

Adult Non-Fiction Honorable Mention—*The Arab Americans* by Randa A. Kayyali (Greenwood Press)

Adult Non-Fiction Honorable Mention—“*Evil*” *Arabs in American Popular Film: Orientalist Fear* by Tim Jon Semmerling (University of Texas Press)

The Arab American National Museum (AANM) Book Award encourages the publication and excellence of books that preserve and advance the understanding, knowledge, and resources of the Arab American community by celebrating the thoughts and lives of Arab Americans. The purpose of the Award is to inspire authors, educate readers and foster a respect and understanding of Arab American culture.

The winning titles were chosen by a committee of readers comprised of respected authors, university professors and artists, and from the AANM, Library & Resource Center Manager Angelita Espino and Manager of Education and Public Programming Celine Taminian.

“This award program is the first of its kind for Arab Americans. It’s important because this ethnic group has had particularly pronounced difficulties in getting published by mainstream

literary presses,” says Gregory Orfalea, the Washington, D.C.-based academic and author of the seminal 2005 book *The Arab Americans: A History*, published by Olive Branch Press.

“And it’s a fortuitous time for such an award, because there is an amazing amount of material being produced now. This award highlights the renaissance of a branch of American literature that’s really been coming into flower in the last ten years,” Orfalea says.

The winning authors will be honored at an invitation-only award gala to be held at the AANM on Thursday, September 6, with musical entertainment by violinist Riad Abdel-Gawad.

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2007 Arab American Book Award. For criteria and nomination information, visit www.arabamericanmuseum.org and click on Library & Resource Center, or contact Angelita Espino at 313.624.0224 or aespino@accesscommunity.org. The nomination deadline is February 1, 2008.

“We hope that, as we give these awards each year, publishers will look a bit more closely at manuscripts by Arab Americans that cross their desks,” says Espino. “Five years from now, we hope the Arab American National Museum Book Award is as recognized and respected as the Coretta Scott King Book Award given by the American Library Association.”

The Arab American National Museum documents, preserves, celebrates, and educates the public on the history, life, culture, and contributions of Arab Americans. We serve as a resource to enhance knowledge and understanding about Arab Americans and their presence in this country. The Arab American National Museum is a project of ACCESS, a Dearborn, Michigan-based nonprofit human services and cultural organization. Learn more at www.arabamericanmuseum.org and www.accesscommunity.org.

Museum hours: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday; noon-5 p.m. Sunday. Closed Monday, Tuesday; Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day. Admission is \$6 for adults; \$3 for students, seniors and children 6-12; ages 5 and under, free. Call 313-582-2266 for further information.

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Arab American National Museum Book Award 2006 Winners

Adult Non-Fiction

Winner

The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood

By Rashid Khalidi (Beacon Press)

In his earlier book, *Resurrecting Empire*, Rashid Khalidi dissected the failures of colonial policy over the entire span of the modern history of the Middle East, predicted the meltdown in Iraq that we are now witnessing with increasing horror, and offered viable alternatives for achieving peace in the region. His newest book, *The Iron Cage*, hones in on Palestinian politics and history. Once again Khalidi draws on a wealth of experience and scholarship to elucidate the current conflict, using history to provide a clear-eyed view of the situation today.

The story of the Palestinian search to establish a state begins in the era of British control over Palestine and stretches between the two world wars, when colonial control of the region became increasingly unpopular and power began to shift toward the United States. In this crucial period, and in the years immediately following World War II, Palestinian leaders were unable to achieve the long-cherished goal of establishing an independent state—a critical failure that throws a bright light on the efforts of the Palestinians to create a state in the many decades since 1948. By frankly discussing the reasons behind this failure, Khalidi offers a much-needed perspective for anyone concerned about peace in the Middle East.

Dr. Rashid Khalidi holds the Edward Said Chair in Arab Studies at Columbia University, where he heads the Middle East Institute. He has written more than 80 articles on Middle Eastern history and politics, as well as op-ed pieces in the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and *The Nation*. He lives in New York.

Adult Fiction

Winner

In the Country of Men

By Hisham Matar (The Dial Press)

This breathtaking novel is set in the rarely glimpsed world of Qaddafi's Libya. The only debut novel short-listed for The Man Booker Prize and *The Guardian* First Book Prize, with rights already sold in 15 countries, *In the Country of Men* has received extraordinary reviews in England. Called "Outstanding...A tender evocation of universal human conflicts" by *The*

Observer and “Glowing with emotional truth...One of the most brilliant literary debuts of recent years,” by *The Times* of London, this novel provides an extraordinary window into Libya and hails the arrival of a remarkable young storyteller.

In the Country of Men is the story of a young boy growing up in a terrifying and bewildering world where his best friend's father disappears and is next seen on state television at a public execution; where a mysterious man sits outside the house all day and asks strange questions; where his mother burns all their books when it seems his father has finally disappeared for good. A stunning depiction of a child confronted with the private fallout of a public nightmare, this is the only novel of its kind on contemporary Libya.

Hisham Matar was born in 1970 in New York City to Libyan parents and spent his childhood in Tripoli and Cairo. He lives in London and is currently at work on his second novel.

Children or Young Adult

Winner

One Green Apple

By Eve Bunting, illustrated by Ted Lewin (Clarion Books)

Farah feels alone, even when surrounded by her classmates. She listens and nods but doesn't speak. It's hard being the new kid in school, especially when you're from another country and don't know the language. Then, on a field trip to an apple orchard, Farah discovers there are lots of things that sound the same as they did at home, from dogs crunching their food to the ripple of friendly laughter. As she helps the class make apple cider, Farah connects with the other students and begins to feel that she belongs.

Ted Lewin's gorgeous sun-drenched paintings and Eve Bunting's sensitive text immediately put the reader into another child's shoes in this timely story of a young Muslim immigrant.

Eve Bunting grew up in Northern Ireland, where storytelling is a tradition, and came to America as a young mother. She has the unique ability to address contemporary social issues, from homelessness to illiteracy, in a sensitive manner, and at the same time to explore the dynamics of family relationships. Bunting is the author of more than 200 beloved books for young people, from preschoolers to teenagers. She lives in Pasadena, California.

Ted Lewin grew up in Buffalo, New York, with two brothers, one sister, two parents, a lion, an iguana, and a chimpanzee. He became interested in art as a young boy when he would draw his brothers' world of wrestling. Lewin later worked as a professional wrestler to finance his studies at the Pratt Institute of Fine Arts, where he met his wife, Betsy, also a children's book writer and illustrator. They reside in Brooklyn, New York.

Adult Non-Fiction

Honorable Mention

The Arab Americans

By Randa A. Kayyali (Greenwood Press)

Americans of Arab heritage have made major contributions to U.S. society, and this is a timely and unique overview of their immigration patterns, settlement, adaptation, and assimilation for a general audience.

The book begins by giving a broad political and social history of the Arab world since the advent of Islam in 632 C.E. Kayyali also takes care to be inclusive of the different groups who can be classified as "Arab," and the discussion of who these people are, with their different religions and beliefs, is an enlightening base to understand their experiences as Arab Americans. Their assimilation and adaptations are discussed, and readers learn about family issues, women's issues, food, media, and religious practices in the Arab American communities.

Within the larger Arab American community, the main issues of pan-Arab identification, Christian and Muslim identities, and generational differences are covered, along with their social networks and celebrations. A final chapter focuses on the impact of Arab Americans on U.S. society, from the arts to politics, with insight into intergroup relations and the impact of 9/11. A sampling of noted Arab Americans, such as Ralph Nader, a glossary, statistical tables, and photos are included as well.

Randa A. Kayyali is a Ph.D. candidate at George Mason University and has written on Arab American issues.

Adult Non-Fiction

Honorable Mention

"Evil" Arabs in American Popular Film: Orientalist Fear

By Tim Jon Semmerling (University of Texas Press)

The "evil" Arab has become a stock character in American popular films, playing the villain opposite American "good guys" who fight for "the American way." It's not surprising that this stereotype has entered American popular culture, given the real-world conflicts between the United States and Middle Eastern countries, particularly since the oil embargo of the 1970s and continuing through the Iranian hostage crisis, the first and second Gulf Wars, and the ongoing struggle against al-Qaeda. But when one compares the "evil" Arab of popular culture to real Arab people, the stereotype falls apart. This thought-provoking book further dismantles the "evil" Arab stereotype by showing how American cultural fears, which stem from challenges to our national ideologies and myths, have driven us to create the "evil" Arab Other.

Semmerling bases his argument on close readings of six films (*The Exorcist*, *Rollover*, *Black Sunday*, *Three Kings*, *Rules of Engagement*, and *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*), as well as CNN's 9/11 documentary *America Remembers*. He analyzes how the films portray Arabs as threatening to subvert American "truths" and mythic tales—and how the insecurity this engenders causes Americans to project evil character and intentions on Arab peoples, landscapes, and cultures. Overall, Semmerling's probing analysis of America's Orientalist fears exposes how the "evil" Arab of American popular film is actually an illusion that reveals more about Americans than Arabs.

Tim Jon Semmerling is an independent scholar in the Dallas/Fort Worth area who holds a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures from Indiana University. Presently, he is studying for his J.D. degree at DePaul University College of Law in Chicago.

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