



## TEXAS INSTITUTE OF LETTERS ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 2025 LITERARY AWARDS

The Texas Institute of Letters has announced the winners of the twelve Annual TIL Literary Awards. This year, TIL will award these writers and two other recipients a total of \$39,000 in prizes at the TIL Awards Ceremony in Brownsville, Texas, on April 26, 2025.

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

The winners of the 2025 TIL Literary Awards are Bret Anthony Johnston, Marcela Fuentes, James Aalan Bernsen, Sasha West, Eduardo Martínez-Leyva, David Ponton III, Jonny Garza Villa, Lyla Lee, Laekan Zea Kemp, Kristie Lee, Patrick Font, and Dylan Baddour. Alongside them twenty-six honor-winners were selected. All awards are for works published in 2024.

During the banquet weekend, Elizabeth Crook will receive the Texas Institute of Letters' prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award, our highest honor. The TIL will also induct thirty-two new members for 2025: Philip Boehm, Sharon Bridgforth, e.E. Charlton-Trujillo, Sean Cotter, Rodney Crowell, Susan Fletcher, J. Bruce Fuller, Bryan A. Garner, Robert L. Girón, John Morán González, Jessica Goudeau, Babette Fraser Hale, Gerald Horne, Fady Joudah, Jennifer Lawson, Lyle Lovett, Lupe Méndez, Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton, Laurence Musgrove, Rena Pederson, John Pipkin, Andrew Porter, Octavio Quintanilla, David Romo, Robert Schenckan, Martha Serpas, Chris Tomlinson, Alexandra Vandekamp, Katy Vine, LaToya Watkins, Randall Watson, and Monica Youn. Newly inducted members will read from their work on April 25 and 26 in Brownsville.

For more information on the TIL or the April 26<sup>th</sup> awards ceremony, contact David Bowles, [president@texasinstituteofletters.org](mailto:president@texasinstituteofletters.org), or visit the TIL website at [www.texasinstituteofletters.org](http://www.texasinstituteofletters.org).

## THE 2025 TIL AWARD- AND HONOR-WINNERS

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

Award-winner: *We Burn Daylight* by Bret Anthony Johnston

Honor-winners: *New Testaments* by Dagoberto Gilb

*The Bullet Swallower* by Elizabeth Gonzalez James



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

Award-winner: *Malas* by Marcela Fuentes

Honor-winners: *Sleepaway: A Novel* by Kevin Prufer

*Linh Ly Is Doing Just Fine* by Thao Votang



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

Award-winner: *The Lost War for Texas* by James Aalan Bernsen

Honor-winners: *The Price They Paid*, by Jeff Forret

*10 to 25: The Science of Motivating Young People: A Groundbreaking Approach to Leading the Next Generation—And Making Your Own Life Easier* by David Yeager



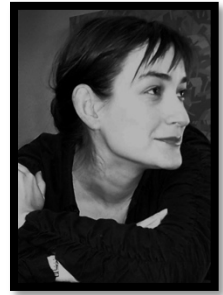
**Burdine C. Johnson Award for Best Book of Poetry**

Award-winner: *How to Abandon Ship* by Sasha West

Honor-winners: *Autobiomythography of* by Ayokunle Falomo

*The Book of Wounded Sparrows* by Octavio Quintanilla

*the eaters of flowers* by ire'ne lara silva



**Texas Institute of Letters Award for Best First Book of Poetry**

Award-winner: *Cowboy Park* by Eduardo Martínez-Leyva

Honor-winners: *Cloud Missives* by Kenzie Allen

*How to Drown a Boy* by J. Bruce Fuller

*How to Kill a Goat & Other Monsters* by Saúl

Hernández



**Texas Institute of Letters Award for Most Significant Scholarly Book**

Award-winner: *Houston and the Permanence of Segregation: An Afropessimist Approach to Urban History* by David Ponton III



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

Award-winner: *Canto Contigo* by Jonny Garza Villa

Honor-winners: *Through Fences* by Frederick Aldama

*Pint-sized Pioneers: Taming the Frontier,  
One Chore at a Time* by Preston Lewis  
and Harriet Kocher Lewis



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

Award-winner: *Gigi Shin Is Not a Nerd* by Lyla Lee

Honor-winners: *Los Monstruos: Rooster and the Dancing  
Diablo* by Diana Lopez

*The Minor Miracle: The Amazing Adventures of  
Noah Minor* by Meredith Davis

*On a Wing and a Tear* by Cynthia Leitich Smith



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

Award-winner: *Desert Song* by Laekan Zea Kemp

Honor-winners: *A Garland of Henna* by Varsha Bajaj

*Miguel Must Fight* by Jamie Ofelia

*A Maleta Full of Treasures* by Natalia Sylvester



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

Award-winner: *The Art of Texas State Parks: A Centennial Celebration, 1923–2023*, designed by Kristie Lee

Honor-winners: *Power: How the Electric Co-op Movement Energized the Lone Star State*, designed by Laura Forward Long

*Cerveza Songs* by Reyes Ramírez

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

Award-winner: “All B’s and One C” by Patrick Font

Honor-winners: “Time of the Preacher” by Brett Anthony Johnston



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

Award-winner: “Forgotten Keepers of the Rio Grande Delta” by Dylan Baddour

Honor-winners: “Waves Through the World” by Joshua Forehand

“The Immortal Life of ‘80 John” by Kip Stratton

“The Juror Who Found Herself Guilty” by Michael Hall

