

BEFORE COLUMBUS FOUNDATION  
PRESENTS THE

A M E R I C A N  
B O O K A W A R D S  
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# The American Book Awards

America was intended to be a place where freedom from discrimination was the means by which equality was achieved. Today, American culture is the most diverse ever on the face of this earth. Recognizing literary excellence demands a panoramic perspective. A narrow view strictly to the mainstream ignores all the tributaries that feed it. American literature is not one tradition but all traditions. From those who have been here for thousands of years to the most recent immigrants, we are all contributing to American culture. We are all being translated into a new language. Everyone should know by now that Columbus did not “discover” America. Rather, we are all still discovering America—and we must continue to do so.

The Before Columbus Foundation was founded in 1976 as a nonprofit educational and service organization dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of contemporary American multicultural literature. The goals of BCF are to provide recognition and a wider audience for the wealth of cultural and ethnic diversity that constitutes American writing. BCF has always employed the term “multicultural” not as a description of an aspect of American literature, but as a definition of all American literature. BCF believes that the ingredients of America’s so-called “melting pot” are not only distinct, but integral to the unique constitution of American Culture—the whole comprises the parts.

In 1978, the Board of Directors of BCF (authors, editors, and publishers representing the multicultural diversity of American Literature) decided that one of its programs should be a book award that would, for the first time, respect and honor excellence in American literature without restriction or bias with regard to race, sex, creed, cultural origin, size of press or ad budget, or even genre. There would be no requirements, restrictions, limitations, or second places. There would be no categories (i.e., no “best” novel or only one “best” of anything). The winners would not be selected by any set quota for diversity (nor would “mainstream white anglo male” authors be excluded), because diversity happens naturally. Finally, there would be no losers, only winners. The only criteria would be outstanding contribution to American literature in the opinion of the judges.

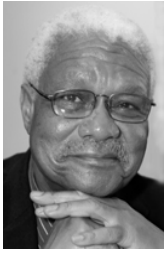
All winners are accorded equal standing. Their publishers are also to be honored for both their commitment to quality and their willingness to take the risks that accompany publishing outstanding books and authors that may not prove “cost-effective” in the short run. There are special Award designations (such as Lifetime Achievement) for contributions to American literature beyond a recently published book. The American Book Awards Program is not associated with any industry group or trade organization. The American Book Awards offer no cash prize nor do they require any financial commitments from the authors or their publishers. The Award winners are nominated and selected by a panel of writers and editors who also represent the diversity of American literary culture.

2008 Board of Directors: Wajahat Ali • alta • Rudolfo Anaya • Marie Anderson  
• Victor Hernandez Cruz • Justin Desmangles • Lawrence Di Stasi • Juan Felipe Herrera  
• Ishmael Hope • Joesph Lease • Kim McMillon • David Meltzer • Simon Ortiz  
• Ishmael Reed • Gundars Strads • Joyce Carol Thomas • Kathryn Trueblood • Shawn Wong

Deceased boardmembers: Bob Callahan and Andrew Hope

# 2008 AMERICAN BOOK AWARDS PROGRAM

Hosted by California Poet Laureate Al Young (May 15, 2005 – October 9, 2008)



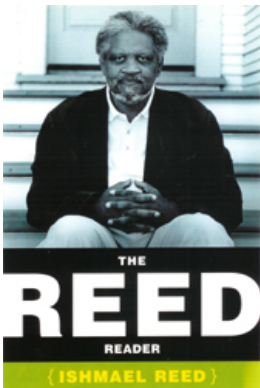
Poet and novelist **Al Young** has written more than 20 books, including his most recent *Something About The Blues*, a massive collection of blues and jazz driven poetry. The collection is also packaged with an exciting audio CD. Since 1990, he has taught poetry and fiction writing at colleges and universities and lectured widely across the country and overseas. Among his numerous honors and awards are fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation, a Wallace Stegner Fellowship, a Fulbright Fellowship, the American Book Award, the Pushcart Prize and the PEN/USA Award.

**Musical Tribute** to Two Before Columbus Board members, Bob Callahan and Andy Hope, and American Book Award winner Danny Cassidy

*Hewlett*, by Turlough O'Carolan and *Maggie Brown's Favorite Single Jig*, attributed to Turlough O'Carolan, played by Carla Blank, Violin  
*In A Sentimental Mood* by Duke Ellington played by Carla Blank, Violin, and Ishmael Reed, Piano

**Carla Blank** is a writer, editor, dramaturg and director. She authored and edited the 20th century timeline reference *Rediscovering America* (Three Rivers Press, 2003), which carries the imprimatur of Before Columbus Foundation. With Jody Roberts, she co-authored an anthology of performing arts techniques and styles, *Live OnStage!* (Dale Seymour Publications, a Pearson Education imprint, 1997, 2000), widely referenced in school districts throughout the U.S. and Canada. With Ishmael Reed, she edited the anthology, *Powwow: Charting the Fault Lines in the American Experience, Short Fiction From Then to Now*, forthcoming in January 2009 from Da Capo Press. She is presently working with director and designer Robert Wilson to create *Kool*, a performance portrait inspired by legendary Japanese choreographer Suzushi Hanayagi, a long time collaborator and dear friend of both artists. *Kool* will premiere at the Peter B. Lewis Theater at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum April 17, 2009.

Carla Blank began her studies on the violin as a child, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with Mihail Stolarevsky, and currently studies with Rachel Durling in Berkeley. In 2007, she made her recording debut as a violinist with The Ishmael Reed Quintet, on the CD *For All We Know*, available through cdbaby, iTunes and Amazon.com.



**Ishmael Reed's** most recent award is 2008 Blues Song Writer of the Year from the West Coast Blues Hall of Fame for his blues *The Prophet of Doom* recorded by Grammy winner, Cassandra Wilson.

THE WINNERS OF THE  
American Book Award 2008

Moustafa Bayoumi, *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America* (The Penguin Press)

Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (Doubleday)

Jonathan Curiel, *Al' America: Travels Through America's Arab and Islamic Roots* (The New Press)

Nora Marks Dauenhauer, Richard Dauenhauer, and Lydia T. Black, *Anooshi Lingit Aani Ka/Russians in Tlingit America: The Battles of Sitka, 1802 And 1804* (University of Washington Press)

Maria Mazziotti Gillan, *All That Lies Between Us* (Guernica Editions Inc.)

Nikki Giovanni, *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni: 1968-1998* (HarperCollins)

C.S. Giscombe, *Prairie Style* (Dalkey Archive Press)

Angela Jackson, *Where I Must Go: A Novel* (TriQuarterly)

L. Luis Lopez, *Each Moth I Sing* (Farolito Press)

Tom Lutz, *Doing Nothing: A History of Loafers, Loungers, Slackers, and Bums in America* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

Fae Myenne Ng, *Steer Toward Rock* (Hyperion)

Yuko Taniguchi, *The Ocean in the Closet* (Coffee House Press)

Lorenzo Thomas, Aldon Lynn Nielsen, editor, *Don't Deny My Name: Words and Music and the Black Intellectual Tradition* (University of Michigan Press)

Frank B. Wilderson III, *Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid* (South End Press)

**Lifetime Achievement Award:**

J.J. Phillips

Author of *Mojo Hand: An Orphic Tale*