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## Press Release

For Immediate Release

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### 2004 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award Winners Announced

#### *Edward P. Jones Among Recipients*

CLEVELAND, Ohio (April 21, 2004) – The Cleveland Foundation today announced the winners of the 2004 Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards for outstanding works that contribute to an understanding of racism or appreciation of the rich diversity of human cultures. This year's winners are:

- **Edward P. Jones, *The Known World***, Fiction
- **Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity, A History of African-American Slaves***, Non-Fiction
- **Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, *Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble and Coming of Age in the Bronx***, Non-Fiction
- **Derek Walcott**, Lifetime Achievement Award

The winners will be honored in Cleveland on September 23 at a ceremony hosted by The Cleveland Foundation at The Cleveland Museum of Art.

"Year after year, Anisfield-Wolf Award books demonstrate the many layers and complexities in our country's history of race relations and diversity and the ongoing struggle still faced by many today. Our 2004 honorees remind us that no matter how many times we talk about the issue of diversity, there's more to learn. The stories continue to need telling," says Jury Chair Henry Louis Gates Jr., the W.E.B. Du Bois Professor of the Humanities, Harvard University.

"Sixty-nine years after the creation of the prize, Anisfield-Wolf Award winners continue to help us understand and appreciate distinct differences among human cultures," says Ronald B. Richard, president, The Cleveland Foundation. "These writers have opened our eyes and challenged our ways of thinking, fulfilling the vision of the award creator, Edith Anisfield Wolf."

*The Known World* is Jones' debut novel and focuses on an often overlooked chapter in American history in which blacks owned blacks in the antebellum South. Jones takes the reader between the past and future, and ultimately to the present, weaving together the lives of freed and enslaved blacks, whites and Indians, providing the reader a deeper understanding of the enduring multi-faceted world created by slavery. *The Known World* received the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the National Book Award.

Berlin, Distinguished University Professor at the University of Maryland, has devoted his career to studying North American slavery and bringing to light the full record and scope of the slave experience. His 1998 work, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, received the Bancroft Prize and the Frederick Douglass Book prize. His 1975 work, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*, was the recipient of the First Book prize of the National Historical Society.

Before writing *Random Family*, LeBlanc spent 10 years immersing herself in the lives of two Latina women in the Bronx, beginning in their teen years. She uses the experience to take the reader deep into this little known ghetto world. By going behind the gangster and drug-dealing headlines of inner-city life, she brings their personal urban soap opera to life, tracking them through the minefields of poverty, pregnancy, prison and the difficulty of breaking cycles they had hoped to escape.

Walcott, a poet, playwright, essayist and painter, has been a major voice in Caribbean culture for more than 50 years. Born in St. Lucia, he has lived in the West Indies for most of his creative life and it is these experiences – artistic isolation and alienation and the multicultural mixture of identities – that influence and shape his work. First published at age 18, Walcott became a recognized force with the 1962 publication of *In a Green Night*. His most ambitious work is the 1990 *Omeros*, an epic in 64 chapters that recalls the drama of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in a Caribbean setting. The Nobel committee, in awarding him the 1992 Nobel Prize for Literature, described it as “a work of incomparable ambitiousness, in which Walcott weaves his many strands into a whole.” Among his many honors are a 1971 Obie Award for distinguished foreign play for *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, a Royal Society of Literature Award and, in 1988, the Queen's Medal for Poetry. He is also an honorary member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and has a chair in English at Boston University.

Now in its 69<sup>th</sup> year, the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards is the only juried American literary competition devoted to recognizing books that have made an important contribution to society's understanding of racism and the diversity of cultures. To be eligible, books must be written in English and published in the preceding year. Past winners have presented the extraordinary art and culture of peoples around the world, explored human rights violations, exposed the effects of racism on children and illuminated the dignity of people as they strive for justice.

Edith Anisfield Wolf was a published poet and civic activist who became passionately committed to social justice as a young girl. As a poet, she chose to use literature as a means to explore racial prejudice and celebrate human diversity. She established the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards some 20 years before the landmark Supreme Court *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling. Her work and wishes continue to be carried out through the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards, which are administered by The Cleveland Foundation.

For additional information, including a complete list of winners, visit the Anisfield-Wolf Web site at [www.anisfield-wolf.org](http://www.anisfield-wolf.org).